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THE CLERK AT ONCE COMPREHENDED THAT DETECTIVE BILLY HAD SOME IMPORTANT OBJECT IN VIEW.

The Hotel Swell-Sharp;

OR,

THE SYREN SHADOWER.

A Romance of the Foils and Tolls of the Great City.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "THE BAT OF THE BATTERY," "JOE PHENIX, THE POLICE SPY," "THE WOLVES OF NEW YORK," "BRONZE JACK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOUNCER.

ONE of the most famous saloons of New York is located on Broadway—a part of one of the great hotels of the metropolis.

Its "art gallery," as the collection of costly pictures which adorn its walls are commonly termed, are the wonder of all European strangers, who are amazed to find masterpieces of great artists hung in an apartment consecrated to Bacchus.

This particular saloon is one of the most popular resorts of New York. Many of the noted denizens of the great city patronize the place, especially after nightfall. It is the up-town "exchange," and prominent men drop in during the evening just to see who is around.

On the night that we introduce this celebrated resort to the notice of our readers the usual crowd was there gathered—a goodly number contributing to the coffers of the proprietor by patronizing the bar, but the majority standing in groups engaged in conversation.

All were well-dressed—it is no rendezvous for a poor man in coarse clothes—for the gayest of the gilded youths of New York were present, mingled with merchants, actors, artists and other professional people, as well as with sporting men—first-class sporting men, mind you! for the small-fry felt out of place in this elegant resort.

There were present also a number of foreigners, men of note in their own countries, who were taking a look at the New World.

To one of these strangers we will call the reader's attention.

He was a man of thirty-five or forty—perhaps forty-five, for he was one of those peculiar persons who hold their own so well as apparently to defy the ravages of time.

He was about the medium size in stature and build, with regular features; his complexion a dark olive, his eyes a shifting gray, which, at a little distance, appeared to be black.

All the lower part of his face was hid from view by a short, dark, crispy, curling beard, which gave him a decided Jewish appearance.

He was one of the guests of the hotel, and the name he had inscribed upon the register was—Philip Anselmo.

His residence was given as Athens, Greece, and to the clerk he casually imparted the information that he had formerly been a merchant of that city, but now had retired from business and was on a tour around the world.

The hotel clerk was a man of uncommonly keen discernment, and the stranger impressed him as being a gentleman of wealth and standing, who, although he did not carry much baggage, had a valet to wait upon him—a well-trained European servant, darker even in complexion than his master.

Probably the fact which gave the most confidence to the astute clerk—ever on the watch for plausible, well-dressed swindlers—that the guest was all right was, that the gentleman, after being assigned to his apartments—he was careful to insist upon good ones—placed a money-box containing a couple of thousand dollars in the hotel safe.

Mr. Anselmo stood near the door which led from the office into the saloon, smoking a cigar and gazing placidly around him.

Into the drinking-room from the street came a well-dressed young fellow, whom, from his yellow side-whiskers, mutton-chop fashion, and the peculiar way in which he carried himself, any student of nationalities would have taken immediately for an Englishman.

This young man glanced around him as if seeking for an acquaintance; then, when his eyes fell upon the Greek, a slight smile curled his lips.

He took a cigar from his pocket, and coming up to Mr. Anselmo said, with a polite bow:

"Will you 'ave the kindness to hoblige me with a light?"

"Certainly!" responded the Greek.

When the Englishman had ignited his "weed," he glanced around and remarked:

"Quite a crowd 'ere to-night."

The Englishman took strange liberties with his h's, once in a while, just enough to betray that he was from "Lunnon town."

"Yes, but I presume it is about the same every night."

"I take it that you hare a stranger?"

"I am—have only just arrived, in fact—from a long journey across the water."

"What does it matter 'ow long the journey, so that you get safe hon the land?" the Englishman remarked, a peculiar expression or emphasis in his words.

At this point the conversation was abruptly interrupted. A gentleman, clad in a plain, dark suit, rather below the medium size, but stockily-built, with clean-cut, resolute features, a rather prominent nose and a pair of sharp gray eyes, which seemed to be about as keen as the orbs of a hawk, who had been absently chewing a quill tooth-pick in one corner of the saloon, apparently taking very little notice of what was going on, had not failed, however, to notice the entrance of the Englishman, and had advanced quietly until he stood just back of him.

As the sentence came from the young man's lips, the hawk-eyed observer had his hand upon the Englishman's shoulder, and he uttered the one word—

"Sneak!"

"Eh?" exclaimed the Briton in great surprise, turning and gazing on the speaker.

The Greek also surveyed him with considerable amazement.

"Sneak! is what I said," responded the other in a quiet way, still chewing the tooth-pick.

"Ah—excuse me—don'cherknow, but were you speaking to me?" the Englishman said, in an extremely polite way.

"Yes; I want you to get out!" the other remarked.

"Excuse me, but I do not understand this at all!" protested the man with the side-whiskers, apparently in great bewilderment.

"Oh, yes you do; now get out, that is a good fellow, and don't make any trouble about it. It will not do you any good, you know. I know you, and I assure you that in this place your room is a deal better than your company, but over in the Bowery in the crook's house-of-call they will be delighted to see you, Sly Sid."

"Really, this is the most hastonishing thing!" the Englishman declared. "You must 'ave made some blooming mistake, don'cherknow!"

"Oh, no; git!"

"That is all right! Bless your soul! I am not going to stoop to argue the point with you, you know. Ta, ta, see you again!" This addressed to the surprised Greek, and then the Englishman retreated.

Mr. Anselmo watched the fellow until he had disappeared; then he turned to the other as though for an explanation of this strange proceeding.

"He was trying to scrape an acquaintance with you, Mr. Anselmo," was the explanation at once volunteered.

"Really, you have my name all right, but you have decidedly the advantage of me!" the Greek exclaimed.

"Oh, that is all right. I was at your elbow when you registered, and that is how I come to know your name," the other answered.

"My name is Chambers," he continued—Billy Chambers. I am a detective employed by the hotel—the bouncer, as the visitors put it when they feel like having a little fun at my expense. I do have to assist gentlemen into the street who are too noisy or otherwise offensive, but it is seldom I am called upon to do anything of the kind."

"Ah, yes, I understand."

"Knowing that you were one of our guests, it is part of my business to see that you were not troubled; and then, too, it is one of the rules of this saloon and house that no crook shall frequent it, or even enter its doors."

"You don't really mean to say that this gentleman who accosted me was—"

"A crook!" added the detective, as the Greek hesitated. "Yes, that is just what he was, and as dangerous a one as can be found in all New York. His right name is Sidney Clutterbuck; Sly Sid his pals call him. He is a confidence man, bunco-steerer and sports' decoy."

"The rascal bothered me to place him for a few minutes, for those sideboards which he has grown make a wonderful difference in his appearance."

"He spotted you for a victim. He has a keen sense for a man who is likely to pan out handsomely, as a game dog has for birds. You have a couple of valuable sparklers in your scarf-pin and ring; and then your watch-chain looks as if the establishment would be worth a hundred at any pawnbroker's in the town. If the fellow had succeeded in getting you upon a string, he would have cleaned you out in short order."

The Greek evidently was not pleased at being held thus cheaply.

"Ah, really, but I am no child, sir!" he said, in a haughty way. "And, though your American rascals may be extra skillful, yet I do not think I could be so easily plundered as you imagine. Of course, I am much obliged to you for your kind warning."

And, with a courtly bow, he quitted the saloon and entered the hotel proper.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUEEN OF DIAMONDS.

BILLY CHAMBERS looked after the Greek, a quiet smile on his face.

"He thinks he is up to snuff," he remarked. "He does not believe that any one can take a rise out of him, and feels a trifle offended at my interference. But that is my biz—that is what I get my ducats for, and I can tell you, my noble duke, if you had been outside the boundary line of this hotel, Sly Sid could have skinned you as clean as a whistle."

"He thinks he knows the ropes, and is a match for our New York crooks; but, unless he is smarter than nine out of ten of these foreigners, somebody will pick him up for all his loose change before he has been a week in the city."

The detective evidently did not have a high opinion of the average foreigner who comes to "do" the "States."

As Chambers turned to saunter back to his corner, he was accosted by a stoutly-built, ruddy-faced gentleman who had just entered the saloon.

This person was neatly dressed in a dark suit, and looked like a prosperous business man, but was, in reality, Detective John Skelly, from the Central Office, one of the most noted of New York shadows.

"Hello, Chambers! Just the man I want to see!" the detective accosted.

Then he drew Billy into a corner, took a memorandum-book from his pocket and read aloud, but in a low tone, so that only Chambers could hear his words:

"Carlotta Seguin, vocalist and actress, known as the Diamond Queen, from Australia. Tall, handsome, about thirty-five, but looks much younger; has black hair and eyes and dark complexion; dresses handsomely, wears very fine diamonds, lady-like and refined. Probably will assume a false name, and possibly change her personal appearance, so that she will not answer the description."

"Very likely," Chambers observed, as the other concluded his reading and returned the book to his pocket. "She would be uncommonly stupid if she did not disguise herself—that is, if she knows her description is in the hands of the police."

"What is she wanted for, John?"

"That is more than I know," Skelly replied. "The superintendent was rather mum about the case. He read this description to me, requested me to copy it in my book and then post all the detectives I met, particularly the hotel hawks, saying it would be ducats in the pocket of the man who was lucky enough to spot the woman."

"No instructions given to arrest her?" Billy asked, in some surprise.

"None; the orders are merely to report at the Central Office if she is discovered in the city."

"Ah, I think I comprehend—a private case?"

"That is what I make of it," Skelly assented. "The woman has probably bolted from Australia with somebody's valuables, possibly run away from her husband or something of that kind, and the party is anxious to locate her so as to be able to negotiate for the return of the articles, and does not desire to kick up any row about the matter."

"These high-strung *prima donnas* and actresses are up to doing queer things, you know," the acute detective remarked.

"Yes; a woman who makes a big name for herself is apt to kick over the traces and smash things generally if she does not have everything her own way," Billy asserted, with the air of a philosopher.

"That is true. Well, so long, Chambers!"

And the Central Office man departed.

Chambers remained in the saloon until the closing hour; then he went into the hotel for a quiet smoke with the night-clerk, as was his custom.

"How is business?" he asked, as he passed behind the counter and took a seat and a cigar which the night-clerk tendered him at the same time.

"Well, we are pretty full to-night; had an unusual number of transients drop in during the evening. The Chicago Express on the Central is a couple of hours late; the coach hasn't come from the train yet; when she comes we will probably catch a few more which will about fill us up."

"Here is the coach now," Chambers observed, as he caught sight of the vehicle drawing up in front of the hotel.

As the clerk had anticipated, there were half a dozen people who desired to become guests of the hotel.

Chambers watched them as they entered the office—not that he took any particular interest in the passengers, but it had become a second nature to the detective to watch everybody.

Two of the travelers were ladies—one a stout old woman, a "commonplace dame," as Chambers mentally remarked, and the other a tall, finely-formed, evidently young lady, although so closely veiled that her features could not be distinguished.

She was markedly graceful, and, as she made her way into the hotel, Billy Chambers thought he had never seen a woman more attractive in person.

"She is a daisy and no mistake!" was his muttered exclamation.

The two ladies proceeded to the parlor, accompanied by an elderly gentleman, whom, from

the way he acted toward the stout woman, the detective took to be her husband.

In a few moments the gentleman came into the office and proceeded to register.

Chambers sauntered to the counter and looked on while he wrote in the book.

"Amos Johnson and wife, Buffalo, N. Y.," the old gentleman wrote on one line, then on the following put down:

"Miss Camilla Selden." He hesitated a moment. "Let me see—Chicago, I presume?" he murmured, and added—"Chicago, Ill.," to the name.

"I suppose you would like the young lady to have a room as near your own as possible?" the obliging clerk remarked, as he turned the register around to put down the numbers of the apartments.

"Well, the lady is not with myself and wife," the old gentleman explained. "She came on the same train, and, as we occupied adjoining seats, my wife and she got into conversation, as women are apt to do, you know. She asked my advice in regard to a hotel, as this is her first visit to New York, and I recommended her to come with us. So, naturally, she requested me to register for her.

"She is desirous, too, of getting good rooms, as she anticipates making quite a stay in the city; she wishes a parlor and two bedrooms, so as to have accommodations for a maid."

"Ah, yes, I see," responded the clerk, in his brisk, business-like way. "I will try to make her comfortable."

"I put her down as being from Chicago, as I understood her to say on the train that she came from there," the gentleman added, in a musing way, "but I am not sure but what I have made a mistake, for I remember now that she spoke of San Francisco. It is possible, therefore, that California is her home. Still, as I gathered from her conversation that she has traveled extensively, I may not be right even about San Francisco."

"Oh, it does not matter; it is a mere form," the clerk remarked, as he inscribed the number of the room opposite to Mr. Johnson's name.

Billy Chambers listened intently to this conversation; his interest had been excited. Chicago—San Francisco were both on the direct line to Australia! Why, the astute detective thought, might not this stranger be the Diamond Queen? Camilla Selden—Carlotta Seguin, the same initials!

The average man would say this was evidence enough that the two names did not belong to one person, for if a fugitive, and seeking to hide her identity under a false name, she would surely adopt one as unlike her own as possible.

Detective experience though has shown that this is not even usually true. Expert and brainy criminals fleeing from justice, and knowing that they will be hotly pursued, often make the blunder of adopting false names whose initials correspond with their own true appellations; and so the law-hounds have been able to trace and finally capture them.

One of Billy Chambers's best attributes was his quickness, and in the present instance he was not slow to act.

"I presume it would be better if the lady's actual residence was ascertained," he remarked, "for it isn't put down correctly; any one seeking her might be misled by the register. It will only take me a moment to see her in regard to the matter; then, too, I can ascertain just what kind of rooms she wants. She may be particular, and it is better to have her satisfied in the beginning than to put her to the trouble of changing."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," Mr. Johnson assented. "Of course I didn't ask her any questions. I am not used to looking out for young ladies, and with such a handsome, stylish girl as this Miss Selden, a man must be careful how much attention he pays her when his own wife is around," and the old gentleman laughed heartily at his joke.

The clerk at once comprehended that Detective Billy had some important object in view in seeking to secure an interview with the woman guest; so he appeared to regard the proposal as a matter of business.

"Now, then, I propose to see if Miss Camilla Selden answers to the description of the Australian Diamond Queen," the detective muttered as he proceeded on his way.

CHAPTER III.

A RECOGNITION.

MRS. JOHNSON and Miss Selden were alone in the ladies' parlor when the detective entered.

The young lady had raised her veil so that Billy Chambers could see what she was like.

She appeared to be about twenty-five, but might be older, for she had one of the long, oval, firm-fleshed faces upon whose surface Father Time's fingers produce but a slight impression.

As the old gentleman had said, she was a stylish, handsome girl—was one who would attract attention even in a crowded assemblage, where many women might be more beautiful in face than she; but the young lady had that indescribable air which must be born with one—

which teaching and training cannot impart, and which is so fascinating.

She was beautifully formed—could have served as a model for the most fastidious sculptor, and when she stirred there was grace in every movement.

When the face was strictly examined it could not, by the rules of art, be called a strictly beautiful one, for her features were a little irregular, were too strongly "pronounced" to be consistent with the rigid canons of beauty.

The firm-set, resolute mouth and chin showed wonderful will-power; the flashing eyes, dark as the orbs of a Gypsy maid, were full of liquid fire—plainly eyes that could melt with love's tenderness, or dart baleful fires of anger when roused by passion's heat.

Her skin was slightly tinged with an olive tint, and yet she could be hardly called a brunette for her hair was of a rich golden hue.

Not the faded yellow so common to the daughters of Albino's cold Isle, but inclining to the red-gold color, which is often found in the tresses of the maidens of a Southern clime where the sun-god's kisses are long, warm and loving.

Billy Chambers shook his head.

"Well, she certainly does not answer the description in one important particular, although she does in another," he decided.

The detective advanced into the room, and the ladies turned.

"I beg your pardon, miss," Billy said, with his politest bow, "but Mr. Johnson was in doubt in regard to your residence—it is customary, you know, to place the residence of guests on the hotel books, so that friends who may be in search of the parties will be able to identify them. He wrote Chicago, and then came to the conclusion that it was possible he had made a mistake."

"Chicago will do," the lady replied, in a sweet, strong, but well-modulated voice, which showed that it had been carefully trained. "And, as far as friends are concerned, as I am a stranger in New York, without any acquaintances in the city, it is not likely I will be troubled by visitors."

"And Mr. Johnson, too, is a little in doubt in regard to the kind of rooms you required."

"I would like a parlor and two bedrooms so I will have room for a maid, just small, nice rooms, you know, as I expect to remain, and I want to be comfortable."

"And, too, I should like to trespass upon your kindness to get me a maid. I presume an advertisement in the newspaper will be the best way," the lady continued, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I should imagine so, although I have some friends who conduct employment agencies—first-class places, where they are particular only to deal with the best of help—and I do not doubt I could get you a maid who would be sure to give satisfaction."

"If you would be so kind I will be very much obliged," the lady observed.

"Don't mention it, I beg!" and Billy Chambers departed.

"Well, I have certainly gained a point!" he mentally ejaculated in a self-satisfied way as he proceeded toward the office. "She wants a maid and I will take care to furnish one who will serve me as well as the lady. Once I get a spy in the camp it will be strange if I do not succeed in finding out all about this young woman, who is no innocent, unsophisticated girl, not used to the ways of the world, but evidently a woman of experience, fully able to take care of herself, and to get ahead of her one will have to get up pretty early in the morning."

"How would sis do for the maid?" he asked himself. "If she will try, and I think she will agree, she will be apt to make a success of it."

Billy now entered the office and made his report.

"Let me see," said the clerk reflectively; "number 90 would suit her nicely, and it is on the same floor with your room, Mr. Johnson, so that with your wife in the neighborhood, she will not be apt to be lonesome. There is a trunk in the room which I have promised to keep for a friend of mine who has just given up the chambers. I ought to have had it taken out, but it will not take long."

The clerk then gave Mr. Johnson his key, summoned a bell-boy to show him to the room, and a porter, to whom he gave instructions in regard to the trunk.

When Mr. Johnson entered the parlor his wife informed him that she must have something to eat before going to bed, and when it was learned that Miss Selden must wait for a few minutes for her rooms to be put in order, it was arranged for her to remain in the parlor while Mr. and Mrs. Johnson went up-stairs; then they would return and all take supper together.

So the Johnsons departed, leaving Miss Selden alone, and no sooner had they got out of the way than a well-dressed gentleman, who had apparently been in concealment in the hallway, entered the parlor.

"At last, after many days, again I come face to face with you!" the stranger exclaimed.

Miss Selden looked up, a shade upon her expressive features, to behold a good-looking young man of thirty or thereabouts standing before

her—a tall, gentlemanly-appearing fellow, well-built, in fact extremely muscular, with regular features, clear blue eyes, and blonde hair, of imposing presence, and one who would be apt to attract attention anywhere.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" the lady asked.

"What?" the man demanded, in surprise. "Is it possible you do not remember me? Yet it is less than a year since we parted. The sunny sky of Italy was above us then, but my heart felt as though the body which contained it dwelt in the frozen regions of the North."

"You said that was to be our final parting, but I told you then I was not willing it should be so, and, you see, I did not hope in vain."

"I fear, sir, you have made a mistake," the young lady said, evidently troubled.

"Oh, no, I have not, and you must not stoop to deception, for deception is entirely unworthy of you. You would not, I know, try to deceive me by a falsehood."

"No, no; you are the woman whom I loved and lost a year ago."

"The reason you gave me then for wishing our acquaintanceship to end was that it was not possible for you to marry anybody; there were strong reasons against a union which neither you nor I could remove, no matter how much we might strive to do so."

"That is true, and my secret I cannot tell you; I must pursue my pilgrimage through the world alone!" the girl declared with a mournful air.

"In Italy I bowed my head to your decree when you said the time had come for us to part, although protesting warmly against it. But now my circumstances have changed."

"I come of a good old New York family, but my branch of it was without wealth. One of my wealthy relatives, though, took a fancy to me, and when he discovered I had talent in the artistic line, he furnished me with the means to pursue my studies abroad."

"It was the bounty of this generous-hearted old gentleman which enabled me to go to Italy, but at the time I met you my prospects were dark indeed, for I had made the discovery that I would never make a great artist."

"Then I determined to return to my friendly relative, and ask his aid to enter some business where, in time, I might hope to gain wealth enough to enable me to provide a comfortable home for the woman I loved."

"I returned to New York. On the day I landed I was on the lowest turn of fortune's wheel, but in four-and-twenty hours my position was altered in the most wonderful way. The wealthy bachelor uncle who had been so kind to me died suddenly and I was his sole heir, and as soon as the fortune was mine I returned to Italy in search of you!"

"Oh, how foolish!" the lady cried, a burning blush now coloring her fine face.

"Love is never wise, you know, and my love argued in this way: you spoke of obstacles to our union; show me these obstacles and see how quickly by the magic power of gold I will be able to remove them!"

"It is not possible," she said, slowly. "Or at least, not at present."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the return of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson.

Miss Selden did not betray any embarrassment when the couple appeared, but said:

"If you will make it convenient to call about three o'clock I will be very happy to see you," she replied.

"I shall not fail," and then with a polite bow he departed.

"Are you ready for a lunch?" Mrs. Johnson questioned.

"Oh, yes; I am almost famished!"

"Come along then!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I think I can do justice to a pretty good square meal myself. When I am traveling nothing that I eat ever does me much good. I am always hungry, and can eat every time the train stops for refreshments!"

The three proceeded to the restaurant and there we will leave them.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTERLOPER.

WHEN the young gentleman left the hotel he went to the drug-store on the corner and asked to look at the Directory.

After consulting the volume he made some notes in his memorandum-book and then took a cab.

The notes he made consisted of addresses, and giving the first one to the cabman he bade the man drive to it.

The ride was a short one, for the house to which the young man went was on one of the cross-streets in the neighborhood of Astor Place.

It was a common, dingy-looking, small, two-storied brick, and the plate on the door bore the name:

MOSES POLATOW.

Lights were gleaming from the windows, a circumstance which the gentleman noted with a deal of satisfaction, for he feared that as the hour was late the inmates of the house might have retired to rest.

He rung the bell, and the summons was an—

swered by a middle-aged man, who looked as if he fitted the name on the door-plate to a hair, for he was a short, thick-set Hebrew, with a stomach on him which would have done credit to a London alderman, a goat-like beard, and a nose of wonderful proportions.

"Mr. Polatow?" said the gentleman.

"Yesh, sir, dot ish mine name," responded the Jew with an elaborate bow, being very favorably impressed by the appearance of the well-dressed gentleman, scenting a probable and profitable customer.

"I have a little matter to which I want you to attend, and as the hour was late I made bold to come to your home, as I presumed the office would be closed," the gentleman explained.

"No, my tear sir, you are wrong about dot!" the old Jew declared. "Der office ish never closed! You go there any time—now—two in der morning—five, Sundays or week-day it ish all der same; you vill always find somebody there ready to attend to business."

"Ah, I did not know that, or else I should have gone there."

"Vell, it does not matter, my tear sir. It ish just as well dot you come here, for if you had gone to the office you would not have seen me, and it is always best to do business mit der boss," and then the old fellow rubbed his hands together and smirked in the face of his visitor.

"Yes, that is true."

"Have der kindness to walk in, sir."

The young man accepted the invitation, and Mr. Polatow conducted him to the parlor, where he took a chair which the host brought for him.

"This is my first experience with a bureau of this kind," the visitor explained.

"Ah, well, my tear sir, I am glad to make your acquaintance, and you will find dot I do business in a first-class manner."

"I have seen your place referred to by the newspapers several times, and having occasion to need the services of a man in your line, your name naturally occurred to me."

The old Jew shrugged his shoulders and a peculiar expression appeared on his face.

"Ah, yesh, der newspaper men try to give me a black eye sometimes, because when I get an important case I am not willing to give der thing away," he explained.

"Well, really now, you can judge how much impression the accounts made upon me when I say that it is not possible for me to remember whether they were favorable or unfavorable," the young man remarked.

"One thing is certain: the articles served as an advertisement for you."

"Yesh, dot ish true."

"To come to business: I desire to have a certain party shadowed."

"It can be done mitout any trouble!" the old Jew declared. "I have attached to mine office some of der best shadows in der business; no better in New York—no better in der world!"

The gentleman took out his memorandum-book. "I suppose I had better put down a description of the party, as well as the name and address?" he said.

"Oh, yesh, dot vill be best. One cannot be too particular about such matters."

The gentleman wrote a few sentences on a leaf of the book, then tore it out and handed it to the Jew.

"Miss Camilla Selden; arrived at Hoffman House to-night. About twenty-five years old. Tall, handsome girl; rather dark, black eyes, golden hair," said Mr. Polatow, reading the writing on the leaf.

"It is my wish that this lady shall be shadowed so carefully that she will not be able to make a move without it coming to my knowledge."

"It can be done without any difficulty!" the old Jew declared.

"And it is important, too, that the shadowing shall be conducted in such a way that the lady will not be aware she is watched."

"Oh, yesh, of course! Mine men are always very careful about dot."

"If der party once tumbled to the idea that shadows were on der track, all der fat would be in der fire!"

The gentleman took a roll of bills from his breast-pocket, the size of which caused the old man's eyes to gleam with a covetous light.

He presented two tens to the Jew.

"That will do, I presume, as a retaining fee," the gentleman said. "You understand that in this matter I require your best work without any regard for the cost?"

"Oh, yesh, I understand, mine tear sir, and you can rest assured dot der job shall be done up in first-class style."

"Put the shadows on as soon as possible, and be sure that they do not relax in their watch by day or night."

"It is possible that the lady may attempt to secretly leave town, and in that case she must be followed and traced, no matter how great the trouble and cost!"

"My tear sir, I assure you dot if she was a bird she could not leave der city mitout one of my men being close on her track!" the old Jew declared, in a confident and grandiloquent way.

"I suppose you wish to be informed if she makes any move?" inquired the head of the Private Detective Agency, for such was the establishment of the aged Hebrew.

"Yes; here is my address."

And producing one of his visiting cards he wrote his address underneath the name.

"The job shall be done up in prime style, and don't you forget it!" the old Jew declared.

The gentleman then took his departure.

"It is very probable that she may endeavor to seek seclusion in flight," the young man murmured, after he had resumed his seat in the cab. "I can see that she is doubtful of herself, but, now that the chance of accident has brought us together again, I am resolved not to lose sight of her."

Leaving the ardent lover to pursue his way, we will return to the party in the hotel.

After supper the three went to their rooms.

The apartments assigned to Miss Selden consisted of a cozy little parlor with two bedrooms leading from it.

Her trunk, a foreign-looking, sole-leather affair, liberally ornamented with all sorts of labels, showing that it had traveled extensively, had been brought up to the room.

The lady unlocked it and took out the necessary toilet articles which she required before retiring to rest.

Putting on a loose, dark wrapper, she sat down and combed out her magnificent tresses, and as she completed this task her eyes were attracted to the hand-sachel which she had placed on the bureau.

"How careless of me!" she exclaimed. "My diamonds are in that sachel, and I ought to have had them put in the hotel safe."

"Still, there is not much danger from their simply remaining in the room over night."

"I will lock them in the trunk."

Then she opened the sachel and took out her jewel-case, and, with the natural curiosity of womankind, examined the gems.

She had a fine collection, ear-rings, brooch and necklace, and as the rays of the gaslight fell upon them they sparkled and gleamed with wonderful brilliancy.

Miss Selden admired them for a few minutes, and then she closed the jewel-case and locked it up in the trunk.

"I do not feel at all sleepy," she said. "And I will not go to bed yet awhile, but lie on the lounge and meditate."

"This meeting with Alexander is unfortunate, for now I have no time for love while the thirst for vengeance is in my heart."

She heaved a deep sigh, and reclined in a half-sitting position upon the lounge; and then, as the busy thoughts came trooping through her brain, she closed her eyes.

For a good half-hour she remained motionless, and any one who could have seen her would certainly have believed that she was fast in slumber's chains.

Then there was a slight noise.

The eyelids of the girl trembled, showing that she was not asleep, but she did not move.

The door of one of the rooms opened and the figure of a man appeared—a little, swarthy-faced fellow, who looked like a foreigner, but only part of his face could be seen, as he wore a black half-mask.

He was neatly dressed in a dark suit, but that he came with evil intent was apparent, for in his hand he carried a gleaming knife, and the concealment of his face, too, by the mask was proof that his purpose was not an honest one.

CHAPTER V.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

MISS SELDEN was not asleep, and although her eyes apparently were tightly closed, in reality all her senses were keenly alert.

Intelligent and quick-witted as she certainly was, she almost intuitively guessed the meaning of the intrusion.

The man had been concealed in the other apartment, and by means of the glass transom over the door had seen her when she examined her diamonds, and now had come to rob her of them.

Though her position was one of great peril, the resolute girl was as composed as though the intrusion of a masked and armed man into her apartment was an every-day affair.

The intruder hesitated for a few moments after entering the apartment, as if doubtful how to proceed, then he stowed the knife away in his pocket and produced a small sponge, together with a vial.

Again he glanced cautiously around, listening as if to assure himself that no one was near. All seeming safe, with stealthy step he approached the reclining girl.

Three steps toward her, and then he was treated to a surprise.

Miss Selden rose suddenly to a sitting posture, and in the accents of command, emphasized by an outstretched hand, cried:

"Halt!"

The best-trained soldier could not have obeyed more quickly the orders of his drill-master.

A moment he gazed at the imperious and

fearless girl; then, with a quick motion, he thrust the vial and sponge into his pocket and whipped out the glittering knife.

"None of that!" Miss Selden exclaimed, in cold, icy tones.

The man stared, his half-raised arm motionless, as though transfixed by her words.

"Not the slightest use to try a game of that kind," the lady calmly assured. "If you know anything of large hotels, you must be aware that there is a watchman on every landing, and it is his place to patrol the entries like a sentinel on duty. A single cry for assistance from me will quickly bring the man to my aid. The door is unlocked, so he can enter at once."

"But I can kill you before he comes!" the masked man hissed, his voice hoarse with rage.

"Oh, no!" the lady replied in the most matter-of-fact way. "Although armed with a knife, which in other hands would be a formidable weapon, you are not a strong man, and never was noted for your skill in handling a blade."

"What do you know about me?" the intruder exclaimed, amazed by the speech.

"Why, man, I know you as well as I know myself!" Miss Selden retorted.

"You are but playing with me!" the intruder snarled angrily. "It is not possible that you can know aught of me."

"Oh, you are as blind as the mole that works in the ground beneath the spreading oak-trees of the Castilian forest!" she exclaimed, contemptuously.

The man started in surprise.

"What know you of Castile?" he cried.

"Ah, it amazes you, does it, to hear me speak of the land beneath whose sunny skies your eyes first saw the light?"

Never was a man more perplexed. He stared at Miss Selden and studied her face scrutinizingly for a full minute, and then he shook his head.

"You do not know me, although I have made it manifest to you that I am well acquainted with Crooked Joseph."

The intruder was astounded, and the knife which he had kept half-poised in the air, came down to his side.

"No room for suspense now, in your mind!" Miss Selden went on contemptuously. "You understand; I know you, and am glad that this meeting occurred, for I may be able to make you useful, Joseph."

"Make me useful?" exclaimed the man in a tone that betrayed his profound astonishment.

"Yes, but I do not deem it necessary to explain how I intend to use you. Time enough when I require your aid."

"How do you know that I will obey your commands?" the fellow demanded, in a sulky way.

"You will not dare to refuse obedience, Joseph. Behold the mystic sign which binds as with an iron chain the will of every son and daughter of the Romany race!" and Miss Selden with the imperious air of a savage queen who possessed the right of ordaining life or death, with her taper forefinger made some strange circles in the air.

The change in the manner of the masked man the moment he beheld the mystic signal was wonderful. The murderous knife was replaced in the pocket; the demeanor of rage and defiance was altered into suppliant prostration!

He knelt, bowing his head in groveling humility, and extending his arms cried:

"Pardon—pardon, dread mistress! Your servant knew you not!"

"It is well! Your attempted crime is forgiven," the lady replied, in tones such as an Indian empress might speak to a slave. "Rise and remove your mask!"

The man obeyed unhesitatingly, and when the mask was removed, he stood revealed, a swarthy-skinned, smooth-faced fellow, with a decidedly foreign look.

"Sit down!" Miss Selden commanded.

The man dropped upon a chair, sitting upon its edge in a gingerly manner, regarding the young woman both reverently and apprehensively.

"Although we are in the New World, I am pleased to see that you are not disposed to refuse obedience to Romany law," Miss Selden remarked. "You are wise, for the arms of the chiefs of Little Egypt are long enough to reach even here, and vengeance, swift and sure, would quickly fall upon the Romany who dares defiance of the Elect!"

These words made a deep impression, for the man at once bowed as if in submission to the queen-like girl, and then responded:

"Oh, have no fear that I will ever be found lacking in obedience. When the secret signal is given I am ready to obey."

"It is well; your obedience shows that you are a true Romany."

"Yes, a true Romany, who does not fear to stand any test," the man declared, earnestly.

"The time may soon come when I will take you at your word," Miss Selden replied, significantly. "How are you named, now, Joseph?"

"Joseph Sinfroid."

"That is what you have always been called."

"Yes; the same. And I spoil the house-

dweller whenever I can, like a true son of Egypt, but manage so carefully that Joseph Sinfroid has never been caught."

"Except in this instance."

"I was a fool!" the man replied, with a shake of the head. "I had no business to fly at such high game. It was out of my line."

"How, then, did you come to do it?"

"In this way: A trunk in this room belonged to a young man who recently occupied these apartments. I knew it was filled with expensive clothing. It was an easy matter to pick the trunk lock. I selected to-night to do the job. I concealed myself in the room, not having any idea I would be disturbed. But the porters came and took the trunk out, and I heard them say that a lady was to occupy the room, so I waited, thinking I might get a chance to help myself to jewelry or money."

"And you caught sight of my diamonds, I suppose?"

"Yes, and I determined to get them."

"But how comes it that you are in this hotel? What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I am the valet of a Greek gentleman—a retired merchant, who is making a trip around the world, but taking his time about it, for he calculates to use up three or four years in the trip. I came across him in Paris. He wanted a valet who could also act as a sort of courier, and as I spoke a half a dozen languages I readily secured the position."

"Ah, I see; and I suppose you are feathering your nest pretty well at the expense of this Greek?"

"Oh, no; this Greek is very sharp; he keeps his eyes wide open. He pays me liberally, and I am not unwise enough to kill the goose which lays me golden eggs by trying any tricks upon him."

"You are sensible. How call you this Greek?"

"Phillip Anselmo."

"I have met quite a number of Greeks, and I thought it might be possible I knew your master, but I do not. Does he know that you are a Roman?"

"Oh, no; I keep that to myself always when I am with house-dwellers."

"Well, that is all. You may go now, and if I need your aid I will summon you."

The man took his departure with every appearance of profound respect.

CHAPTER VI. ON THE SCENT.

JUST about nine hours after Miss Camilla Selden arrived at the hotel, the Superintendent of the New York Police, upon coming to his office, found Billy Chambers waiting to see him.

"You are an early bird this morning, William," the chief observed, as he took his seat behind his desk and motioned the detective to a chair.

"Yes, it is rather early."

"Business, I presume?"

"Oh, yes; strictly business. I thought there might be others in the field, and wanted to be the first."

"I see," said the superintendent, with an approving nod.

"It is about this Australian Diamond Queen."

"Oh! You are indeed early in the field!" the chief exclaimed. "Why, the notice was only sent out late last night."

"Yes, it was ten or eleven o'clock when Skelly gave me the points."

"And you have located her already?" asked the superintendent, in surprise.

"Well, really, I didn't have much piping to do, for the woman whom I think is the Diamond Queen arrived at our hotel last night."

"Tumbled right into your clutches, so to speak?"

"Yes; she answers to the description exactly, with the exception that her hair is not black, but of a rich golden color, and she calls herself Miss Camilla Selden instead of Carlotta Seguin."

"The two names are quite similar—the same initials," the chief observed, musingly.

"Yes, I remarked that."

"The color of the hair doesn't amount to anything; she may wear a wig or have had her hair bleached; women are up to all sorts of tricks of that kind—parties, you know, who are not 'wanted' for anything, and who have no reason to disguise themselves."

"Yes, I am aware of that, of course," the detective said.

"What sort of a woman does she appear to be—loud and flashy?"

"Oh, no; very quiet and lady-like."

"That answers to the description again."

"I think she is the party, but I will probably be able to tell decidedly in a few days, for the lady happened to say last night, in speaking about her room, that she wanted accommodations for a maid whom she intended to procure, and I immediately volunteered to get her one."

"William, that was a good stroke of business!" the chief declared.

The detective looked pleased.

"The maid I am going to furnish is my sister," he announced.

"Well, Chambers, if she resembles you she ought to be able to do good work."

"She is smart enough, and I have no doubt she will fill the bill. My idea is that, unless this Miss Selden is able to hold her tongue far better than the majority of women, in a day or two my sister will know a good deal about her."

"Yes, yes, no doubt of it."

"Well, supposing this woman is the Australian Diamond Queen, what is she wanted for? Is she to be immediately arrested?"

"My dear fellow, now you have got me; for you have asked a question which I am not able to answer," the superintendent replied.

Chambers looked astonished.

"A few words will explain: In the last mail yesterday I got a letter from the superintendent of police at Melbourne, Australia. He wrote as a personal friend. I met the gentleman when he made a brief visit to America, a couple of years ago. He was a jolly fellow, like the most of these Englishmen who hold good positions, and we had an exceedingly agreeable time together. In this letter he spoke of the pleasure we had, and reminded me of the promise I had made that if at any time it was in my power to do him a service I would be glad to oblige him. Then he went on to say that a woman known as Miss Carlotta Seguin had left Melbourne; he expected that her destination was New York; would I do him the kindness to put my men on the scent. He requested me to wire him immediately the moment I discovered that she was in the city. Then followed the description of the woman, just the same as I sent out."

"And he gave no hint as to why the woman was wanted?" Billy Chambers asked.

"Not a hint! I have given you the substance of his communication."

"It certainly is strange," the detective commented. "Isn't your friend a little slow?"

"Yes, that is my impression," the chief admitted. "One of these conservative fellows, you know, who makes haste so slowly that grass might grow under his feet."

"Then really you haven't anything to go on?" Billy Chambers observed.

"No, only that I judge the woman must be wanted pretty badly, or else my Australian friend would not have troubled me about the matter. My notion is that it is not a criminal case, for if it was the Melbourne man would have instructed me to arrest and hold her; so I inferred that it was a private case, or if it was a regular one, the parties who had suffered did not want to prosecute and make the matter public."

"I see; the idea is to nail the woman and force her into a settlement."

"That I presume is the programme."

"I wanted to get a little idea about the matter so as to know how to act," the detective explained. "It is disagreeable to work in the dark, and besides, if I put my sister in as a spy, it is going to cost some money."

"Well, as far as I can judge, I think the chances are that it will pay you to go into the thing," the chief continued; "but after what I have told you, you are just as competent to decide as to that as I am. But as a further step now, I will wire the Melbourne man that I think we have spotted the game!"

"I see, and then he will send instructions."

"Exactly; and therefore it will not be long before we are in possession of further facts in the premises."

"Very well. I will put my sister on the track at once," the detective said, as he rose to depart.

When Chambers had gone, the superintendent proceeded to examine his mail and to attend to the routine office duties, but was soon interrupted by another caller.

It was the old Jew, Moses Polatow, the private detective, who put in an appearance.

"How you vos, superintendent?" the Hebrew saluted, upon being ushered into the presence of the chief, and he made a most elaborate bow.

"Very well, thank you," responded the official, a little coldly, for his opinion of the Israelite was not a flattering one.

"I have called this morning upon a little matter of business," Polatow remarked, smiling in his most affable way.

"What is it?"

"I met Detective Skelly last night on Broadway and he gif me some points," the Jew explained, taking from his pocket a memorandum-book, decidedly the worse for wear.

"Ah, yes."

"About a woman who ish wanted—Carlotta Seguin, the Diamond Queen from Australia," Polatow continued.

"Yes, the notification was sent out last night," the chief admitted, in a careless way, and at the same time taking up and examining some of his letters as though he took little interest in the matter, much to the surprise of the Hebrew.

"Well, you know dot I pride mine-self upon de way I conduct mine business, and now careful

I am about der agents who vork for me," Polatow explained.

"Oh, what are you giving me?" the superintendent exclaimed. "You know very well that some of your men are as big rascals as can be found in the city."

"Oh, nein! I am very careful to have no crooked work, and my men ish vera goot ones. Now, apout dis woman—v'at is der information wort?" he continued, insinuatingly.

"Oh, you are too late!" the chief declared, with a laugh. "There isn't any chance for you. The woman is already spotted."

"Mine gootness! is dot so?" the old shadower exclaimed, evidently much disappointed.

"Yes; but if it wasn't so, there isn't a chance for you to make a dollar out of the thing."

"Ah, vell, I don't know. Of course, if there ish no money in it I cannot waste mine time. But, you see, mine men are goot ones for to pipe der womans off so soon."

"Not a dollar in it for you."

"Vell, vell, I am sorry."

And the Israelite retreated, much disgusted, while the chief chuckled with delight.

CHAPTER VII.

SHE SPEAKS.

PROMPTLY to the appointed time on the afternoon of the day on which the superintendent of police had received his visitors the young man, who had taken such an interest in Miss Selden, sent up his card, which bore the name of Alexander Boudinot.

The Boudinots are one of the old New York families; years ago they were prominent in the fur trade in company with the Astors, and so laid the foundation of their enormous wealth.

Miss Selden expected the young man, so was prepared to receive him, and when his card came had him conducted at once to her apartment.

"I am aware that it is not strictly according to rules to receive you here," she said, as she gave her hand to the visitor and then placed a chair for him. "But as it is indispensable that our interview should be a private one, it could not possibly occur in so public a place as a hotel parlor."

"That is certainly the truth," the young man replied, as he occupied the proffered seat. "A more unsuitable place for an interview can hardly be imagined."

"I have been thinking over our conversation of last night, and I have made up my mind to speak to you in the frankest manner," she said; and she seated herself in an easy-chair facing the one in which Boudinot sat.

"That is right; there should be perfect frankness between us. I can assure you that there is, on my part," he declared, with great earnestness.

"Oh, I feel sure of that," she replied, immediately. "And I give you my word, too, that I will be perfectly fair with you in every way, and I will begin by making the honest confession that I had a great mind to run away this morning and hide myself so that you would not be able to find me. But when I came to calmly reflect upon the matter and I remembered how nobly you have always acted toward me, I could not bring myself to treat you in that way, although it was exactly what I did in Italy."

"Yes, I have not forgotten, nor do I fail to remember either how terribly disappointed I was when I found that you had gone, and I did all in my power to find out what had become of you."

"I took good care to arrange my flight so that it would be difficult for any one to follow me," she responded, with a sad smile.

"That confession is proof, I think, that I did not underrate your devotion, for I felt sure that you would use all possible means to discover where I had gone," she continued.

"Well, I did my best," he observed. "You must remember that, although my desire to find you was great, and I would not have spared any toil or trouble, yet I was terribly impeded by the want of means."

"Aladdin's palace is not altogether a fable, for the feats that the Genius of the lamp and ring performed have been very nearly approached by the almost miracles which the possession of unbounded wealth has enabled the modern millionaire to accomplish."

"If I had had plenty of money you would not have succeeded in hiding yourself away from me. I could have found a clew to your whereabouts, but as it was, all I had to depend upon was a moderate allowance, paid at regular intervals. It was quite enough to enable me to live in comfort and to provide myself with all I needed, and, in fact, until I met you and got in the habit of indulging in flowers, and other little expenses necessary for me to show my appreciation of your genius, I never really spent all of my money."

"Ah, you see I exerted a bad influence over you!" she exclaimed, extending her hand impulsively toward the young man.

He took the soft, white hand, pressed it with his own broad palms, and then touched his lips to it.

"Oh, I am so foolish!" she exclaimed, with-

drawing the hand abruptly. "But them am I not a woman, and is it not natural that I should be impressed by devotion such as you have shown unto me?"

"Yes, few women are there who do not feel a sympathy with the man who loves them, even though they may not be able to return the passion."

"That is true, if the man is wise enough not to turn the love into persecution."

"You do not really mean that for me?" the young man exclaimed, in a reproachful tone.

"No, I suppose that would be going too far, for I will have to admit that your attentions have been agreeable, and at one time I fancied that the hour would some day come when I should be glad to find peace and rest in your love."

"But you changed all of a sudden and fled from me?"

"There was a good reason for it. Do you not remember that in the letter which I left for you I told you that?"

"Yes, but it was all so vague and unsubstantial that I could not make anything out of it."

"My head was all in a whirl at the time I wrote, and I hardly knew what I said," she replied.

"It was a very unsatisfactory letter," Boudinot remarked. "Very brief too, and I believe I can repeat it now word for word, although I wore the letter out long ago by reading it over and over."

The girl laughed, and then sighed.

"Ah, me!" she exclaimed. "I fear that it will not be much use for me to attempt to talk reason to a man who is willing to admit that he can be so foolish in regard to a woman who treated him so badly."

"The letter said: 'You must forget me, I am called away by a mission to which I must devote the rest of my future life, and until my work is done I can have no thought of love or happiness,' and that was all."

"Yes, I remember now; you are right. It was both brief and unsatisfactory," she said with a deep sigh. "But under the circumstances it was not possible for me to say more."

"Although I loved as well as ever a woman was loved by man, yet I was not prepared to yield obedience to your wishes in this matter, and so I did my best to find out where you had gone."

"I fear that you found that to be a difficult matter, for I took great pains to arrange my flight so that I could not be followed."

"Yes, you are right, I could not find a single clue, but I was hampered by the want of means. I had no money to hire spies and detectives. I attempted to do the work alone and failed, and then it was that I made up my mind decidedly to abandon the life of an artist, and I came home here to New York to see what arrangements I could make."

"Then came the sudden turn of Fortune's wheel which transformed me from a beggar to a millionaire, and as soon as I was put in possession of my wealth I returned immediately to Italy, determined to trace you."

"Ah, Alexander, there is no gainsaying that you are the most devoted of lovers!" Miss Selden exclaimed with a sad smile.

"And I succeeded in my object too!" Boudinot announced. "I had plenty of money, and to accomplish my desires I was prepared to spend it as freely as though gold was but a common thing and could be had for the asking."

"I failed before, but this time I did not. I got a clue and followed you to England, but there was thrown off the track, and it was some time before I could discover where you had gone, although I employed the best detective talent that money could buy."

"At last the bloodhounds hit off the trail. You had gone to Australia, and I followed you there, just as I had followed you to England."

"The woman who could doubt the truth of your love must be hard to convince indeed!" the lady declared.

"In Australia again I was baffled, and I did not get on your track until the very day you sailed for California, and then it was just by accident. I was on the dock, drawn thither by an idle curiosity only, and as the steamer glided away from the wharf I saw you among the passengers."

"You must have been disappointed indeed! So near and yet so far!" the girl exclaimed, deeply interested in the recital.

"I acted promptly, though," Boudinot declared. "I knew that it would not do to wait for the sailing of the next steamer, for that would give you time to get away from San Francisco, and it might be difficult for me to follow on your track, for the idea had come to me that you were not going to remain in California."

"That was strange."

"Yes, rather odd. No time was to be lost, and, as I could not wait for the next steamer, I determined to buy a craft and see if I could not beat the steamer to the Golden Gate."

"Oh, you were resolved to accomplish miracles!" the girl exclaimed, her eyes kindling with excitement, and a bright flush mounting to her cheeks.

"Luckily for my purpose, there was a handsome steam yacht for sale, lying in the harbor," Boudinot continued. "I bought it, and, six hours after I caught sight of you on board of the vessel, I steamed out on the high seas in hot pursuit."

"This is like a romance!" the girl declared.

"Ah, truth is always stranger than fiction," the young man replied.

"It was a close race, for your steamer beat me into San Francisco by two hours only."

"But that was sufficient to prevent you from overtaking me, for I went from the steamer directly to the Overland train, and in an hour from the time that the steamer was made fast to the dock, I was on my way to the East."

"I know that; I was in possession of all the facts in ten minutes after I arrived at San Francisco," Boudinot responded, smilingly.

"Oh, you must be a conjurer!"

"No, it was my money that did the conjuring," the young man responded.

"Just before leaving Melbourne I sent a cable message to a firm of private detectives in San Francisco, describing you, and instructed them to ascertain where you went upon leaving the steamer."

"Yes, I understand. It was a clever trick, and of course succeeded."

"It did, and when I learned that you had purchased a ticket and started for New York, I made up my mind not to endeavor to overtake and speak to you on the road, but to beat you into New York, and be in readiness to receive you when you arrived."

"By hiring a special train I succeeded in accomplishing my object, and, when you arrived, it was an easy matter to track you to your hotel."

"You hunted me down at last!" she observed, with a smile. "And I must say that I think you are as persevering a lover as any woman could wish for."

"And now I will make the frank confession that, having hunted you down, as you justly term it, I resolved not to let you escape me, for I thought that, after all my trouble, I deserved to be rewarded by an interview."

"That is certainly the truth!"

"You said that you had half a mind to run away this morning, just as you did before, but the idea came to me last night that you might play me some trick of the kind, and so I took measures that you should not deprive me of my interview."

"Ah, a light breaks in upon me!" she exclaimed. "As I passed through the hotel this morning I noticed a sharp-eyed man, looking like a Jew, who appeared to pay considerable attention to me, but then, as I am used to being stared at, I did not trouble my mind about the matter."

"I have no doubt that was the spy whom my money placed upon your track. I put the matter into the hands of one of those private detectives. I suppose you will not like it, now that you know the truth, but you must remember that I have been chasing you half around the world for three years, and, now that I have succeeded in overtaking you, I was determined not to allow you to slip through my fingers again."

"You understand that I did not give any instructions which would at all compromise you," the young man hastened to add. "All I did was to leave your name with the detective and request him to shadow and warn me of your movements."

"I do not blame you," Miss Selden remarked, slowly. "Under the circumstances, I think you were justified in acting as you did."

"As I told you, I had half a mind to run away again, but when I considered how steadfast you had been in your attachment, I could not bring myself to do it, so I came to the conclusion to confide in you—to tell you my story, so you will understand the barrier that there is at present between us."

"I am glad that you have come to this determination, and I will listen with the utmost patience," Boudinot declared.

"Yes; I feel that it will be a relief to tell my story to some one, for even in my dreams a cry of anguish rings in my ears, and I hear the pleading female voice exclaiming: 'Oh, husband, you are killing me!' It was my mother who spoke, and the cry for mercy was addressed to my father!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORY OF A CRIME.

"THIS seems like the prelude to a fearful tale," Alexander Boudinot observed.

"You have judged rightly; it is. I am about to tell you of a tragedy which made me an orphan and cast me out upon the mercy of a cold and cruel world," Miss Selden replied, with evident deep feeling.

"I am anxious to hear your recital. Everything connected with you has for me the greatest interest."

"My mother was an English Gypsy girl, very beautiful, and, as she was the daughter of the then English Gypsy king, she had received a fine education, for her father had her educated among the house-dwellers, as the Gypsies term

all those who do not belong to the Romany race."

"Yes, I am aware of that fact," the young man remarked. "At different times in my life I have come in contact with these peculiar people, and, being interested in them, made a close study of their peculiarities."

"When my mother was eighteen a young Englishman fell in love with the beautiful Gypsy girl, and she returned his passion. At first the Gypsy king, the father, was inclined to be enraged in regard to the matter, but the Englishman was a manly, straightforward fellow, and when he offered to give up his people—to forsake the house-dwellers for the sake of the Gypsy princess and to come and dwell in the tents of the Romanys, the remarkable concession pleased the children of Egypt, and so the pair were married."

"I have noticed that though the Gypsies affect to despise the house-dwellers, yet, when one of them is willing to give up his people and become a Romany, they are always made much of by the tribe."

"Such is usually the case," the girl coincided.

"Six months after the marriage my mother's health became so threatening that the wise woman of the tribe, the seer and doctress, said, that, to save her life, she must leave the harsh English clime and seek a land where the sun beamed more warmly; so the wedded pair proceeded to Italy, where I was born. There were no Gypsies in that part of the country, and, in order that my mother should not be exposed to remark, both she and my father lived like the house-dwellers, and no one suspected that they were aught but what they appeared to be—a young English couple who had come to Italy for the benefit of their health."

"There was a mystery about my father which none of the Gypsies understood. He was in receipt of a certain sum of money which was sent to him regularly, but who paid it, or why he received it, no one knew."

"It is possible that it was no secret to my mother, but, if she knew, she never revealed the truth to any one."

"The old Gypsy king, my grandfather, was questioned once in regard to the matter by one of the elder men of the tribe, but he replied angrily that, as long as the young husband kept to his vow and acted like a true Romany, his private matters, such as any dealings he might have with the house-dwellers, was nobody's business, and meddlers had best be careful how they pried into affairs which did not concern them."

"Such language from the lips of a man, who was used to ruling his people with a rod of iron, was quite sufficient to stop all gossip upon the subject."

"I can understand that; for, from what I know of the Gypsies, I am aware that the will of the chief is law to the rest of the tribe."

"My parents remained in Italy, for my mother's health was not good. My father took a little farm and amused himself by cultivating it. This was the ostensible way in which he got his living, but in reality it was the money which he received regularly that supported him."

"All these facts, you must understand, I learned in after years."

"When I was four years old the tragedy occurred which changed all the current of my life. One night my mother put me to bed as usual, and I, child-like, fell immediately into a sound sleep, from which I was awakened by a scream of terror. I slept in a little room connected by a door with the bedroom occupied by my parents. It was my mother who screamed, and, as I awoke, I heard her cry, 'Oh, husband, you are killing me!' Then I heard the noise of a struggle in the other room; it lasted but for a minute and after that all was still."

"I knew not what to make of it, for I had never known my parents to quarrel, and I was not old enough to be aware that I ought to get up and ascertain what was the matter."

"A child of your tender years could not be expected to act promptly in such an emergency."

"I soon went to sleep again, but in a little while was again awakened, and when I opened my eyes the room was filled with people, some of whom I recognized as being our neighbors."

"My mother was dead, she had been strangled in her sleep, and when I was questioned as to whether I had heard any noise, in my childish innocence I told of the cry of anguish which I had heard. My father was not in the house, and I will say, at this point, that no one ever saw him again."

"His unaccountable disappearance, my recital, and the fact that nothing within the house had apparently been touched, as would have been the case if robbers had been at work, served to fix suspicion upon him."

"Then the fragment of a letter was found which contained this sentence: 'What an idiot you are to sacrifice your life for the sake of a pretty fool of a woman! Why do you not get rid of this wife of yours, who has dragged you down to obscurity, and come back to your own country, where a glorious career awaits you!'"

"And, of course, those who knew of this letter

jumped to the conclusion that it showed a motive for the murder?"

"Yes, my father was accused of the crime, and if he had been caught there is but little doubt he would have been convicted."

"Being thus, at one blow, deprived of my parents, I was cast helpless upon the world. A neighboring farmer volunteered to adopt me and to his house I was taken, but there I only remained some six months, and young, tender child though I was, the farmer's wife made a drudge of me; and no doubt I would have sunk under the cruel treatment if the Gypsies had not come to my rescue."

"In some mysterious way—it really seemed as if the birds of the air had carried the news—the sad story of the tragedy had come to the knowledge of the old Gypsy king, my grand father, and he promptly sent messengers to get me."

"The Romany race, you know, have little faith in the justice of the house-dwellers, and so the messengers, instead of endeavoring to get possession of me by legal means, quietly watched their opportunity, kidnapped me one night, and smuggled me away to England, without any one knowing aught of the matter; so you see I disappeared as mysteriously as my father."

"I remained in England with the Gypsies until I was twelve years old. The old Gypsy king was as particular about my education as he had been about my mother's, and I was taught as thoroughly as though I was the daughter of an earl. Then the Gypsies got into trouble and were compelled to leave England. We went to Spain, which was my grandfather's native land, and there I learned to dance and sing, accomplishments which proved of vast service to me in after years."

"As I grew older, the Gypsy life grew irksome to me, and with the consent of the old Romany king, I adopted that profession which I was following when you made my acquaintance."

"And one which you were surely born to adorn," the young man remarked, with a bow.

"You are very kind," she replied, acknowledging the compliment with a smile. "Years passed. The memory of the awful tragedy had become almost like a dream to me, when it was suddenly recalled. An evil-looking man accosted me one night when I happened to step to the garden of the hotel at a late hour to get a breath of fresh air. He claimed to be a Romany, and craved assistance from me. I believed that he was a Gypsy, for he knew all about my history. I told the man I was willing to aid him, for the Romany blood within my veins would not let me deny money to a son of Egypt if he needed it, but, to my surprise, the fellow demanded that I should give him a regular allowance, or else, he declared, he would make public the fact that I was the daughter of a murderer."

"The rascal!"

"Yes; he was a scoundrel! but he made a mistake when he attempted to make me a victim. I laughed at the threat, and told the fellow that if he dared to attempt such a thing, I would call upon my Gypsy brothers for aid, and they would speedily punish him for daring to threaten one who was in reality a queen of the Romany race, if she cared to claim the title."

"Bravo! I applaud your courage!"

"The fellow saw that he could not carry out his threat with safety to himself, and in his baffled rage he declared that I was no true Romany, for I had never tried to punish the murderer of my mother, but had allowed my father, the traitorous house-dweller, to escape."

"How can the dead be punished?" I asked.

"The fellow laughed maliciously. The false house-dweller who won the Gypsy princess, and then tired of his prize, was a cunning rogue, he declared, and then he told me a strange tale."

"My father was not dead, he said, but, after killing my mother, had escaped from Italy on board of a ship bound for Australia, which land he had reached in safety, and he was living in the city of Melbourne, rich and prosperous, and now called himself James Monteth."

"This must have been a most astounding revelation!" Boudinot exclaimed.

"It was; and at first I was disposed to give little heed to the story, but the man persisted that the tale was true, and said that I could easily ascertain by placing myself in communication with a private inquiry office in Melbourne, whether there was such a man there as James Monteth. He knew that there was, for he had seen him, and James Monteth was my father, the murderer of my mother, and he further stated that from an old Gypsy woman in England I could obtain more particulars."

"All the wild Romany blood in my veins was in a flame. If my father was living, it was my duty to meet him, face to face, and call him to an account for his awful crime, for he had not only killed the woman who loved him, but had deserted me, his helpless child!"

"You were placed in a dreadful position," the young man remarked.

"Yes, my brain was in such a whirl that I thought I should go crazy. I used the telegraph to communicate with Australia, and soon re-

ceived word that there was a merchant there named James Monteth."

"Then I made up my mind to seek him, and it was at that time I wrote the letter to you."

"I can understand now the state of mind which you must have been in, and I do not wonder that you did not wish to think of love."

"I went first to England, but I could not find the Gypsy woman. When I reached Australia, I had no difficulty, though, in discovering James Monteth, but it was not my father, for he was a young man, not ten years older than myself. When I explained to him that I sought my parent, he confessed that there had been another James Monteth, whose clerk he had originally been."

"This first Monteth had sold his business to this young man and departed from Australia, suddenly and secretly, and my informant said it was because he was persecuted by secret enemies—Gypsies, he fancied, from what he learned."

"Probably the fellow who tried to blackmail you also tried the same game upon your father," Boudinot suggested.

"That idea came to me. I was careful, in speaking to this gentleman, to avoid saying aught harsh of my father, and he, sympathizing with the child in search of a parent, confided to me his suspicion that the James Monteth whom I sought had found refuge in New York."

"And you immediately followed in pursuit?"

"Yes; and now you have my story."

"I thank you for your confidence, and I am very glad you have spoken so freely," Boudinot declared. "I will say frankly that I feel much encouraged, for, although I can see that a barrier exists at present, yet, in time, I am satisfied it will be removed. Will you accept my aid in this pursuit? I pledge myself not to speak of love to you until your mission is fulfilled!"

"It is a bargain!" Miss Selden exclaimed, in her impulsive way, extending her hand, which the young man quickly grasped.

"Aid me to fulfill my task, and then, when it is done, perhaps there will be room in my heart for love, but at present I think only of vengeance!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPY.

BILLY CHAMBERS did not have much trouble in persuading his sister to undertake the task which he had planned for her.

Margaret, or Maggie Chambers, as she was called, was a good-looking girl, bearing a strong likeness to her brother.

She was a dressmaker by trade, but, being of a romantic or restless disposition, wearied of such a humdrum life and craved a more active existence.

She was doubtful if she could give satisfaction as a lady's-maid, having had no experience in that line, but, acceding to her brother's wishes, she consented to try, and was duly introduced by the hotel detective to Miss Selden as an applicant for the position under the name of Maggie Moore.

Miss Selden, pleased with the young woman's appearance, after putting a few questions, engaged her.

Three days now had the girl played the part of spy, and, as she told her brother had not succeeded in learning much of anything concerning her mistress.

"You must have patience, Maggie," the hotel detective had said. "You must not be in too great a hurry in a matter of this kind. The first thing to do is to secure the young lady's entire confidence. That done, the rest will be easy."

"Well, I can't say that I particularly admire this sort of a life," Maggie exclaimed, with a sniff of contempt. "It isn't what I thought it was going to be. It seems to me rather mean to get this lady's confidence just so I can betray her!"

"That is the game, Maggie," the detective replied, with the air of a philosopher. "Console yourself with the idea that the end justifies the means. It is necessary for the ends of justice for somebody to play the spy, else a great many criminals would never be caught."

"Well, I don't believe that this lady has done anything wrong, anyway!" the girl declared, in an obstinate way. "What is it they think she has done?" she demanded.

"Ah, Maggie, that is just what the superintendent wants to find out, and that is why a spy has been placed to watch her."

"Well, as I have undertaken the job, I will go through with it, but I will never undertake any more work of the kind," she averred, with decision.

"Oh, you will get used to it," the brother assured. "I think you are getting along nicely. So keep your own counsel and see what comes of it."

This ended the conversation.

Maggie believed that Miss Selden had no suspicion she was anything but what she appeared to be—a mere waiting-maid, but that very afternoon she was destined to be undeceived.

Miss Selden had a habit of taking a nap after dinner, and on this occasion, she had just risen from her couch, taken a seat before the glass, and Maggie was busy arranging her hair.

The young lady watched the girl by means of the glass for ten or fifteen minutes. Then she said abruptly:

"I can see that you have not had much experience in this line, Maggie."

The girl was amazed.

"Why, Miss Camilla, I was in hopes I was giving satisfaction!" she exclaimed, hardly knowing what to say.

"Oh, I have no complaint to make," the young lady replied. "It is rather a novelty, though, to be waited upon by a girl like yourself, and I like it."

"I—I don't think I understand what you mean," Maggie remarked, terribly confused.

"Why, I saw at the beginning that you knew very little of the duties of a lady's maid, and when I comprehended what an intelligent and lady-like girl you were, I suspected that something was out of the way."

"Oh, you are pleased to be complimentary," Maggie exclaimed.

"No, I am only speaking the truth, and then when I came to study your features I saw how strongly you resembled the gentleman who introduced you to me, and when I inquired about him, and ascertained that he was the hotel detective, I suspected at once that you were his sister, and had entered my service for the sole purpose of playing the spy upon me."

The girl was dumfounded and knew not what to say.

"You see, Maggie, I am no innocent child, but quite the contrary—an experienced woman of the world," Miss Selden continued. "And it is not an easy matter to deceive me. I knew something was wrong the first day you began to serve me, and it did not take me long to discover the truth."

"Then, it is you who has been playing the detective, and not I," the girl declared, with a laugh.

"I certainly have discovered something important, and that I think is more than you have done."

"I'm sure there is nothing about you to discover, as far as I can find out!" Maggie replied.

"You are right about that, and you must admit that you have made a complete failure as a shadower."

"Oh, yes, and got found out into the bargain; so I suppose the sooner I take myself off, the better you will like it."

"You are wrong there, Maggie, for I have taken a fancy to you, and I should be sorry to have you go away," Miss Selden frankly responded.

"I am glad to hear that!" Maggie admitted. "I will be honest with you, too, Miss Selden, and say I would be sorry to go, for since I have been here you have treated me more like a friend than like a waiting-maid."

"That is because I saw you were no ordinary waiting-maid, but a girl of intelligence and some refinement."

"Well, I am ashamed of myself for attempting to play the spy upon you, and I told my brother so, too. You see I admit that you have guessed correctly. Detective Chambers is my brother."

"There is a strong family likeness between you; and now, Maggie, I am going to make a proposition to you," she continued. "I am really at a loss to guess why your brother should go to the trouble of putting a spy on me."

"Well, I don't suppose I ought to do so, but I am going to tell you all I know about the matter!" Maggie at once returned. "So long as you have found me out, I don't see what particular harm it will be."

"I agree with you, for there must be some mistake, but I presume your brother imagines there are good reasons for shadowing me, else he would not have ordered it."

"I don't think he really knows anything about you—that is, he is not acting on his own knowledge, but on a hint from Police Headquarters."

"Why should the police trouble their heads about me?" Miss Selden asked, in amazement.

"That is more than I know, but I am certain from what my brother said that he got a hint from Headquarters that it would be well to keep an eye upon you."

"It is strange, and I do not understand it," the lady said, in a musing way. "Still, it makes no particular difference. There is some mistake, for I know I have done nothing to warrant the attention of the police."

"That is just the report I made to my brother."

"Now, Maggie, I have an idea!" Miss Selden went on. "I need such a girl as you are—not as a servant to dress my hair and to wait on me merely, but as a faithful friend upon whom I can depend. I will admit that I have come to New York on business of great importance, and that my presence here is a menace to a certain party. It is possible that this party has learned of my errand here and has influence enough to get the Police Department to interfere in the

matter. I say it is possible, but I do not think it is probable."

"Neither do I, miss; and from what I know of the superintendent of police I do not believe he would interfere in such a case!" Maggie declared.

"From what you say, I conclude it is a private affair," she continued—"something in which the police have no business to interfere."

"Yes, as far as I am concerned the business is strictly private, and, in fact, if the police interfered to prevent me from accomplishing my purpose they would be making a mockery of justice," Miss Selden announced.

"If that is the case you can depend upon it, miss, that the superintendent would not have anything to do with it. I have known the chief ever since I was a child, and I feel sure that he is a perfectly honorable man, in every respect. If you are not all right, then you would need to be alarmed, otherwise not."

"I do not fear his scrutiny, Maggie," the lady replied firmly; "and now what do you say? Do you feel as if you would like to keep on with me? I am going to engage in a struggle with a powerful and unscrupulous man, and there is danger that not only I will be attacked, but any one who is with me may be assailed."

"Oh, I am not at all afraid, so long as we have the right on our side!" Maggie rejoined, spiritedly. "And, Miss Selden, I know I should be a deal better satisfied than in playing the spy upon you."

So the bargain was made between the two, and when the girlish messenger of vengeance secured the assistance of Maggie Chambers she acquired a valuable and trusty ally.

CHAPTER X. THE RENDEZVOUS.

BLEECKER STREET in the neighborhood of Broadway is filled with saloons, ranging from the well-fitted American bar-room to the obscure cellar restaurant, always run by a foreigner, where the men who are on bad terms with the police usually congregate, or have their regular rendezvous.

To one of these underground apartments we will conduct the reader.

It was a dingy place, poorly fitted up, both saloon and restaurant, in the foreign style.

The sign without bore the emblem: a bunch of purple grapes and the inscription, "Hotel des Alps. Jacques Mazzone."

The police gave the place a bad name, claiming that it was nothing more nor less than a house-of-call for all sorts of foreign rogues with which the great city swarms.

The saloon was in the basement of a small brick house, and the upper part was the hotel, conducted on the European plan.

On this night of which we write the saloon was well filled with a motley crowd, the most of the people being seated at the small tables, placed around the room, playing cards and dominoes.

The proprietor, a dark-browed, brawny fellow, who looked like an Italian, stood at his accustomed place behind the bar.

Into the resort came the man who had had the unpleasant interview with Miss Selden, Joseph Sinfroid.

As he came up to the bar the landlord looked at him in a way which seemed to suggest that the new-comer was no stranger, yet he made no open sign of recognition.

Sinfroid studied the face of the proprietor for a moment, then exclaimed:

"Hello, it seems to me you are an old acquaintance!"

"Yes, I think so, if you are the man I take you to be."

"You can call me by name, I believe."

"Crooked Finger?"

"Right! I am the man."

Then the two shook hands like old acquaintances.

"Thunder and lightning! I am glad to see you!" exclaimed the burly host.

"Well, I am not sorry to meet you, Jacques Mazzone, or Black Jacques, as you used to be called in the good old times when you were one of the kings of the mountain on the borders of Italy."

"Yes, yes, those were glorious days!" the saloon-keeper exclaimed with a sigh.

"You were about the last man I expected to see in this New World."

"It is something of a change from the old time."

"I was told that I would find the man who kept the Hotel des Alps to be one of the right sort, but, as your name was not mentioned, I had no idea of meeting you."

"It is the old story," the host remarked, with a shake of his big head. "The pitcher that goes often to the well will be broken at last."

"There is a deal of truth in that old adage."

"Right, my brave!" Mazzone rejoined. "I do not wonder that you were surprised to see me here, making a living in this way, for the last time we met I was, as you said, one of the kings of the mountain, and I had under my command a round dozen of as good men as ever collected toll in an upland pass."

"You met, with misfortune, I presume?"

"The old story; I was betrayed by a traitor, a miserable wretch who sold me out—revealed to the authorities my retreat. We were surprised one night in our sleep, and though we made a brave fight our band was exterminated. I managed to escape without a wound, but for three months I led the life of a dog, and at last, coming to the conclusion that there would never be any rest for me as long as I remained in Italy, I managed to make my way to the sea-coast and shipped for this asylum of hunted men. Here I have prospered and shall doubtless remain to the end of my days."

"Well, I am glad to meet you, and glad also to find that you are the landlord of a place of this kind, for it is a good thing for men in my line to have a cover where they can discuss business without danger of being disturbed."

"No fear of that in my place," the landlord asserted. "True, the police detectives poke their noses in here once in a while, but my customers are too keen to be caught, and when they want to talk business there are rooms up-stairs to which they go."

"A good idea, and as I expect to meet a couple of men of the right sort here to-night, I think I will have to engage one of the rooms."

"It is at your service, my brave!" the host replied. "I am always glad to accommodate an old friend. Who are the parties, by the way? Old acquaintances?"

"No, I think not," and then Sinfroid glanced at the clock. "It is time my friends were here."

"They need not come into the saloon at all," the Italian explained. "Here is the key of number five," and as he spoke he took the key from the board on which it hung and gave it to Sinfroid. "The room is at the head of the stairs on the second floor. You can wait for your friends at the door, and when they come take them up to the room without anybody being the wiser. There is a bell in the room, and if you need anything you can summon the waiter."

"Thanks!" Sinfroid exclaimed, as he took the key. "You will not lose anything by giving accommodations to our party."

"I understand," the host responded. "I know you and your friends are of the right sort."

Sinfroid, after a glass of brandy with his old confederate, regained the sidewalk and took up a position by the door.

He had not long to wait, for within ten minutes the Englishman, Sly Sid, whom the reader will doubtless remember as having been introduced in the first chapter of our tale, came sauntering along the street.

Sly Sid nodded familiarly when he came up.

"I am on time, I believe," he said.

"Yes, take this key. It unlocks Room Number Five, which you will find at the head of the stairs on the second flight."

"The other party hasn't come yet?" the crook questioned.

"Not yet, but I expect him every moment, and, as he is usually punctual, I do not believe he will keep us waiting. When you get up-stairs order a bottle of wine," and Sinfroid gave a dollar to the crook.

"Pon my honor, you are generous!" the Englishman exclaimed.

"Oh, it is not I who stand the expense, but the captain."

"Ah, yes, I understand. Well, from what little I have seen of him, I should say he is one of the right sort," and then the Englishman proceeded up-stairs.

Five minutes more passed, when down the street from Broadway came a stalwart, well-built man, dressed in dark clothes. He wore a thin overcoat, rather the worse for wear, with the collar turned up. He also had a muffler around his neck, as though he feared taking cold, but from the fact that the well-worn slouch hat was pulled down low on his forehead, a shrewd observer would have suspected that the turned-up collar, the muffler and the way in which the hat was worn, were all for the purpose of disguising the identity of the man.

In fact, but little of his face could be seen, for a bushy black beard covered all the lower part.

"We must be on our guard," the stranger said, quickly. "I fear I have been followed by a police spy," and he pointed up the street to where a dark figure could be seen lounging along, carelessly yet evidently vigilant and alert.

CHAPTER XI. THE GREEKS.

SINFROID took a good look at the supposed spy.

He was a lad of seventeen or eighteen, very poorly dressed, and looked as if he hadn't been introduced to soap and water for a month.

The boy had stopped and was gazing into a shop-window about a hundred feet up the street.

"You think that this young rascal has been watching you?" Sinfroid inquired.

"Yes, I feel pretty certain of it," the other replied. "He was loitering around the door of the hotel when I came out, and as I am in the habit of keeping my eyes open I noticed him. I came straight down Broadway, and, you know,

it has become a second nature for me to keep on the watch for spies, so I was not long in discovering that this boy was on my track."

"It is very strange," Sinfroid said, thoughtfully. "I do not understand it. Since you have been in this country you have not done a single stroke of work, and I do not see how it can be possible that any suspicion could be excited in regard to you."

"Neither do I; it is a mystery, and the only explanation, as far as I can see, is that somebody whom I have roughly rubbed against in the Old World is in this country and has recognized me."

"But you have not seen any one whom you remember to have met before?"

"Not a soul."

"It is indeed a mystery."

"Yes; and I don't like the idea that there is a spy on my track," the new-comer declared, with an angry frown.

"It is not pleasant."

"And I tried to throw the fellow off, too. I had my disguise under my coat, and when I came to a dark cross street I turned the corner in a leisurely way and then slipped into the basement entrance of a high stoop-house. There I assumed my disguise, and remained for a good five minutes, hoping to throw the spy off the track."

"It was a clever dodge!" Sinfroid exclaimed, with a nod of approbation.

"Yes, and any one would have imagined such a movement would have been a complete puzzle to the shadow."

"It certainly seems so."

"When I came out, after assuming my disguise, I did not go directly back to Broadway, but took a roundabout course, and as I did not see anything of the rascal I came to the conclusion that my trick had succeeded and the spy was baffled, but after I turned the corner above I happened to glance behind me, and, to my surprise, beheld the boy."

"He is an unusually skillful shadow, or else he would never have been able to track you in this way," Sinfroid remarked.

"I do not care so much for being shadowed, for now that I know a spy is on my track I will use such precautions that he will not be able to accomplish anything," the other observed. "But I am annoyed to think that any one should suspect there is anything wrong about me, for I fancied there was not a soul on this side of the water who knew anything about me."

"Suppose you accost the boy and ask him what he means by playing the spy upon you," Sinfroid suggested, noticing that the youth was advancing slowly toward them.

"That would not be a bad idea, and I will try it."

The boy approached, and as he came up, the stranger with the beard, who was no other than the retired Greek merchant, Philip Anselmo, beckoned to the lad.

The boy came slouching up in the easy independent way peculiar to the street gamins of the metropolis.

"W'ot der yer want, boss?" he inquired.

And when he spoke his shrill falsetto voice betrayed that he was not as old as he looked.

But this is commonly the case with the street boys of New York.

The life they lead is a hard one, and it makes them prematurely old.

"Harkye, young man; what do you mean by following me?" Anselmo demanded, sternly.

"Ah, w'ot is der matter wid you?" the boy inquired, in lofty scorn. "Who is follerin' of you, I would like to know?"

"You are!"

"No, I ain't! W'ot is biting you, anyway?" the boy replied.

"You will find that something will bite you if you don't mind your own business and stop playing the spy upon me!" the Greek declared, angrily.

The boy edged off a little, so as to be able to make a retreat if the other made a hostile movement, and then, in the saucy way common to the street Arabs, cried:

"Oh, come off! W'ot kind of a cove are you, anyway, and w'ot have you bin a-doin' that you are so precious afeard of being follered? You are a hard-looking bloke, anyway, and if I was for to meet yer on a dark night in a dark street I would be mighty skeered, 'cos I reckon you would go for a feller's leather or his sparkler in a minute."

"Never you mind my looks," the Greek rejoined. "I want you to understand that I am up to your little game, and if I discover that you are dogging my footsteps again I will break every bone in your body!"

"Oh, you are talking mighty big now, I reckon!" the boy retorted, in a very contemptuous way, but taking good care as he spoke to edge further and further off.

"You will find that I will be as good as my word," the Greek declared.

"Ah, you are wasting too much of yer chin!" the lad retorted. "W'ot do you s'pose I keef fer you, anyway? You must think a mighty heap of yourself to reckon I would want to play the shadow out on you."

"You have heard my warning, and if you

know when you are well off you will pay heed to it," Anselmo declared, in an extremely threatening way.

"Ah, you don't frighten anybody wid yer big words nor yer black looks. I ain't askeerd of you, nohow you kin fix it!"

And then the boy slouched across the street in a very independent way.

The two men watched him for a few moments in silence, and neither moved or spoke until the youth was lost to sight down the street.

"He is evidently not a police spy," Sinfroid said, the first to speak.

"No, unless the police of this city act on the Parisian plan and employ all sorts of spies so as to make it difficult for any one to detect that they are being watched.

"That is a game which I don't think the Americans are up to," Sinfroid replied. "It may be that this boy is the spy of a gang who have marked you as being a pigeon worth the plucking."

"In that case it would be dog eat dog, eh?" the Greek remarked with a grim smile.

"So it would seem, but as the spy has disappeared suppose we go in," and Sinfroid explained to the other the arrangements he had made in regard to the private room.

The Greek expressed his approbation, and the two proceeded up-stairs.

They found the Englishman in possession of the room, and he had already begun to sample the wine.

"Upon my word I thought that you two would never come!" he declared. "And as I am a dreadful lonesome fellow I commenced on the wine."

"That is all right."

And then the Greek surveyed the apartment. "This appears to be perfectly private," he observed. "But as we have some important business to discuss we must be positive on that point, for otherwise our schemes might come to naught."

The others agreed that it was wise to be certain about this matter, and so a careful examination of the apartment was made, but as far as the three could see there wasn't any danger of their conversation being overheard by any one.

"I had no doubt but what we would find that everything was all right," Sinfroid asserted. "I have known Mazzone for many years and have always found him to be a man who could be depended upon."

"To business then!" Anselmo exclaimed. "But first we will drink success to our schemes, whatever they may be!"

This agreed with the idea of the others and a liberal portion of the wine was disposed of by the three.

"Now, gentlemen, it is an old maxim that in union there is strength, and there is no doubt about its truth. We three, separately, could not accomplish much, but if we combine our skill and strength, unquestionably we shall be able to do a great deal."

"Oh, yes, three good pals working in concert ought to be able to collar some tidy swag!" the Englishman declared.

"Yes, three Greeks such as we are should do well," Anselmo remarked. "That is the modern term for gentlemen in our line who live by their wits; no matter where they come from, nor their color, all men who prey upon the world are now classed as Greeks."

"That is right," Sinfroid observed. "To men like us all countries are alike. Our home is where the best prey is to be found. We are Greeks—citizens of the world at large!"

"Let us drink to the Greeks!" Sly Sid exclaimed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHEME.

"Now then, it is necessary that one of us three be placed in command, for even a republic of Greeks must have a head," Anselmo said, after the toast was drunk.

"Oh, you are the man for the position!" the Englishman exclaimed. "Although this is the first time that I have had the pleasure of meeting you, yet I know your reputation well enough, and I am satisfied you are just the man to plan the game so that your associates will have fat pickings."

"Yes, captain, you should take command," Sinfroid declared.

"Well, I am agreeable if it is satisfactory to you two," Anselmo responded.

"You are elected!" the Englishman exclaimed.

"I am complimented by the honor," the Greek responded, with a bow. "And I assure you, gentlemen, I will do my best to make our association both pleasant and profitable. Already I have set my wits to work, and I think I have found a pigeon who will be worth the plucking."

"Aha! we must drink to the health of that pigeon!" exclaimed Sly Sid, who was evidently fond of liquor.

The toast was duly drunk, and then Sly Sid made the discovery that the bottle was nearly empty, a fact which he lamented.

"We will have another after we get through with our discussion," the Greek remarked.

"Ah, yes, but talking is dry work," the Englishman remarked, with a grimace.

"It will not take us long to settle the details of the affair," Anselmo replied.

"As I told you, gentlemen, I think I have found a pigeon who will pay us well," he continued. "You, of course, are aware that I did not come to this country of my own free will, but because the old country got a little too hot to be comfortable. A few unfortunate affairs went wrong, truly not my fault, for they were planned with the utmost carefulness; but no matter how skillful a man may be, he cannot guard against the chance of accident."

"That is so very true!" the Englishman assented. "Some of the best schemes that I have ever got up failed most completely because luck deserted me at a critical moment."

"Although the police were hot on my track, yet I managed to fill my pockets pretty well before I sailed for this New World," the Greek explained. "But this is an expensive city, and I have expensive tastes; my funds are beginning to run low, and it is necessary for me to replenish my exchequer. Thanks to my being one of the Greeks, I was able to meet with you two gentlemen, and as I possessed the password, used by our brothers all over the world, I easily proved to you that I was true blue. Now, then, by your assistance I hope to be able to make a good round sum."

"I put up at one of the swell hotels of the city, for you understand, gentlemen, if you want to catch big game, you must go where the big game is."

"Oh, yes, that is true," the Englishman affirmed. "That hotel used to be good ground for me, but that miserable detective there has got onto me, discovered my little game, you know, and now I am not allowed to show my nose in the place."

"Yes, I remember when you came to see me there the fellow warned you to depart," the Greek remarked.

"I hadn't any idea that the man knew me," the Englishman observed. "And when he spoke to me I tried the indignant dodge. It wasn't any use, though, for I soon discovered that he was up to my game, and so I cut my lucky. It isn't good policy for a man in my line to quarrel with these detective chaps."

"Certainly not, and you were wise to depart," Anselmo asserted.

"But now to come back to my idea," he continued. "My object in going to one of the swell hotels was, as I said, to find a pigeon, and I think I have succeeded."

"That is good!" the Englishman exclaimed.

"It is a woman this time," said Anselmo.

"Aha! one of the fair sex!" Sly Sid cried, rubbing his hands together and chuckling. "A game of that kind would be right in my line. I have filled my pockets quite handsomely seven or eight times from the store of ladies who were unwise enough to be persuaded by me that I could take care of their property a great deal better than they could themselves."

"This lady upon whom I have fixed my eyes is one of the guests of the hotel," Anselmo explained. "She is there alone and unattended, and is apparently rich, for she wears magnificent diamonds."

A peculiar light shone in the shifty gray eyes of Sinfroid as he listened to the words of the Greek, and he said, slowly:

"Magnificent diamonds, eh?"

"Yes; she has a room on our floor; you must have noticed her—a tall, handsome girl, and yet rather peculiar-looking, for she has dark eyes and golden hair."

"Ah, yes, I have seen her," Sinfroid replied, who was in a quandary and did not know what course to pursue.

"As far as I can learn she is one of those independent Englishwomen who travel all over the world without the slightest fear," the Greek remarked. "She has plenty of money evidently, and if I could succeed in entrapping her into a marriage I think I could make a good thing out of it."

"The idea is a capital one, but it may be difficult for you to carry it out," Sly Sid observed, reflectively. "Such a woman is apt to have her wisdom-teeth cut, and the game will have to be played very skillfully, or else the stake cannot be won."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that. I understand that it will require considerable headwork to succeed, but, as I think the game is worth it, I am willing to go to the trouble," the Greek replied. "The first point is to make a favorable impression upon the lady, and in order to do that a trick must be worked."

"Yes, that is true," the Englishman coincided. "It would not be a difficult matter to procure an ordinary introduction, but that would not answer the purpose."

"No, it would not; it is necessary for me to produce such an impression that she will look upon me as being something more than an ordinary friend," Anselmo observed. "And, in order to establish myself at once in her good graces, I am going to avail myself of a very old trick, but, old as it is, it generally works to perfection."

"That is very often the case," the English-

man assented. "The older and more simple the trick, the better it often works."

"I have kept a careful watch upon the girl ever since I got the idea that I could make something out of her, and so became aware of the fact that she was in the habit of taking solitary walks."

"That is quite English, you know!" Sly Sid declared.

"Yes, I know it is, but she takes her exercise in a peculiar way. She does not go by day, but waits until after dark, and then takes a car to Harlem."

"To Harlem, eh?" the Englishman exclaimed, in a tone which indicated surprise.

"Yes, and she always goes to the same street—to the same block, in fact, and for a good half-hour she amuses herself by promenading up and down."

"That is a very odd proceeding!" Sly Sid remarked.

"Yes, and the fact has puzzled me considerably. I have played the spy upon her, but she appears to be so thoroughly on the alert that I have not dared to watch her very closely for fear of being discovered."

"Perhaps she goes there to meet some one," the Englishman suggested.

"I had that suspicion, but so far it has not been verified," the Greek replied. "As I said, I have been very careful how I watched her, and have kept at a good distance, but my watch has been close enough to enable me to see that she has not met anybody, nor does she act as if she expected to meet any one."

"She merely walks slowly up and down the street; it is a thinly-settled district, more country than city, the block is an extremely long one, and there are only about a dozen houses on it, all of them of the better class, the residences of well-to-do business men; and, as I said, she paces up and down the street, first on one side and then on the other, walks very slowly, and apparently amuses herself by looking in at the windows of the houses as she passes."

"Well, 'pon my honor! I must say that I think this is about as strange a thing as I have ever heard of!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "I say, do you think the young woman is in her right mind?"

"Oh, yes, I do not think there is any doubt about that," the Greek replied.

"Of course, I presume she has some good reason for acting in this peculiar manner, and I suppose that if I kept the shadowing up I should in time discover all about it."

"Yes, yes, undoubtedly," the Englishman assented.

"But, really, my curiosity has not been strongly excited," Anselmo remarked. "For, as far as I am concerned, I don't believe it will interfere with my plans at all; in fact, this peculiar habit of hers gives me a chance at her which otherwise I should not be able to get."

"My scheme is to have some ill-looking fellow accost her, and then when she is thoroughly frightened I will make my appearance and drive the ruffian off."

"Then after the fellow departs I will make the discovery that we both reside at the same hotel, and will offer to escort her home. If she accepts, and the chances are great that she will, you can depend upon it that I will not neglect to improve the opportunity."

"It is a capital scheme and I do not see any reason why it will not work to perfection, although it is so extremely simple!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "And if you care to have me undertake the rôle I think I can play the part of the ruffian to the life."

"Yes, I would be glad to have you," the Greek replied. And then he proceeded to arrange the details of the plan.

Another bottle of wine was dispatched, and by the time it was finished the interview came to an end and the three departed, taking separate directions.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GYPSY'S COUNCIL.

THE wily Crooked Finger felt decidedly puzzled as he walked slowly up the street toward Broadway.

"I don't think I ever was so undecided about how to act in my life," he muttered, his brow dark and contracted by the lines of thought.

"The Greek has been a good friend to me, and at a time too when I needed friends, and then, on the other hand she is of my race, a Romany, and if I take part against her, and it is discovered that I have proved to be a traitor, the earth will not be wide enough to hide me from the vengeance of the sons of Egypt."

"Ah, it is not pleasant to be thus placed between the two horns of a dilemma, and I wish I was well out of the scrape."

By this time Sinfroid had come to Broadway, and as he turned the corner he was accosted by an old man, very shabbily dressed, almost in rags in fact, with a dark face, wrinkled like a mummy's; silver-white was his hair, and he wore a scrubby beard of the same hue.

"Help a poor old man, good gentleman, and Heaven will reward you," the beggar whined in the true professional beggar's way.

It was on the tip of Sinfroid's tongue to bid

the old man go hang himself, when he happened to take a good look at his face; at the same moment the beggar peered at the features of Sinfroid, and each recognized the other.

"What! can I believe my eyes, Crooked Finger?" the old beggar exclaimed.

"Father Lemuel, as I am a sinner!" the other exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I, what is left of me!" the old man replied with a hollow cough.

"Why, Father Lemuel, it is ten or fifteen years since I heard of you, and everybody believed that you were dead."

"Well, for the last ten years I have been dead to the world—shut up in a living tomb," the aged beggar replied.

"With some of our people I sailed for Australia," he continued, "expecting to reap a rich harvest there, but the ship in which we took passage was a miserable old hulk, we were driven out of our course by storms and finally wrecked on an island inhabited only by savages."

"But three of us escaped, and we were made slaves by the savages. My companions, young and vigorous men, chafed at their captivity and finally stole a canoe one night and attempted to escape, but they were discovered, pursued and both killed."

"Hard lines!" the other exclaimed.

"Ah, yes, but often during the ten years that I remained with the miserable wretches I was often tempted to provoke the savages to kill me also."

"Yes, but while there was life there was hope!"

"Very true, and that is the way I reasoned. Finally my captivity came to an end, for the savages made an attack upon a vessel which turned out to be a war ship in disguise. The savages had attacked and plundered so many trading-ships that the sloop-of-war had come on purpose to punish them."

"Served the rascals right."

"And so I was rescued, but misfortune continued to pursue me, for on my way to England the ship in which I embarked encountered a terrible storm and was so damaged that we had to abandon it, taking passage in an American vessel which we fortunately met."

"Well, that was lucky."

"Yes, the ship was bound for California and I was landed in San Francisco. I have had a hard time of it, and have been gradually making my way to New York with the idea of getting back to England. If I could have met any of the sons of Egypt they would have helped me, but there are few men of our race in this country."

"That is true."

"You are the first whom I have encountered, and I am glad indeed to meet you for I am almost penniless."

"Well, I am so situated, thank fortune! as to be able to help you, and though I am living with the house-dwellers yet I am a true Romany and glad to be able to help a brother!" Sinfroid declared, endeavoring to appear as sincere as possible.

"It will not be any money out of your pocket in the long run!" the old man declared. "You know how I stand in the tribe when I am home; my voice has as much weight as any son of Egypt in England."

"Oh, yes, I know that, Father Lemuel. For years you have been called the Wise One, and in all matters of moment your counsel has always been sought."

"Yes, yes, as I told you, my words have weight."

"Give yourself no concern for the future, for I will see that you have money enough to take you back to England."

"Thanks, my son, thanks, and the time may come when I will be able to return the favor!" the old man declared.

"Oh, do not allow that to trouble you!" the other hastened to exclaim. "I am glad to have the opportunity of being of service to you. It is the duty of every true Romany to aid a brother whenever he can."

"Yes, yes, that is our religion," the old man assented. "The house-dwellers pretend that they believe in the same thing too, but they do not live up to it; on the contrary, they are always ready to rend and tear one another like a lot of dogs!"

"No doubt about that," Sinfroid replied. "But we sons of Egypt stick to our brothers; and, by the way, that reminds me that I would like to have your advice upon a certain matter. You have always been called the Wise One, and I feel certain you can give me good counsel."

"Ah, well, I have lived many years in the world, and have seen a great deal of life; then, too, I am the seventh son of a seventh son, and so am gifted beyond the common run of mortals."

"Yes, Father Lemuel; I know that, and that is why I am anxious to have your advice."

"You shall have it, Crooked Finger, and you can depend upon my giving you good counsel."

"But this is no place to talk," the other remarked. "Let us go into yonder saloon; we can get something to drink, and take a table

in a corner, so as to be able to converse at our ease."

"That is a good idea," the old man replied. "I am so weak that it is as much as I can do to keep upon my feet, and a glass or two of brandy would put new life in me."

"You shall have all the brandy that you can drink, Father Lemuel," Sinfroid declared. "And I have no doubt it will do you good."

Then the two entered the saloon, which was a small one situated in a basement.

There were only a few people in the place, so the pair had no trouble in getting a table in the rear of the saloon so situated that they could converse without any danger of their words being overheard.

It was a French saloon, and the landlord, being used to having all sorts of strange customers, was not surprised when Sinfroid called for a pint bottle of brandy.

When the liquor was brought the old Gypsy took a liberal supply, but Sinfroid drank sparingly.

"Ah!" exclaimed Father Lemuel, smacking his lips, "that puts new life in my old body. It is both meat and drink to me now."

"Do not be afraid of it—it is good stuff," the other declared. "And if this is not enough, we will have another bottle."

"This will answer, I think," the old fellow replied, as he helped himself to another glass of the generous liquor.

"And now, my son, you spoke of needing counsel."

"Yes; I do, indeed, and the matter is a weighty one."

"Make it known unto me, and I will do my best to advise you," the old Gypsy observed.

"I am in a peculiar position, and I know not how to act," Sinfroid began.

"Three months ago, in England, I was unlucky enough to get into a quarrel, and in order to get away from my man I was obliged to hurt him pretty badly. It was an ugly scrape for me, for he turned out to be the son of one of the magistrates of the county, and the father made the most strenuous efforts to get hold of me."

"Ah, yes, I know how that is!" the old man declared with a weighty shake of the head. "Let one of the county 'beaks' once get after a man and he will be apt to have a hard time to get away."

"I had to leave England, and as I was obliged to get out in such a hurry I had to avail myself of the first chance that offered, and that was why I came to this city, as I escaped by means of a ship bound to this port."

"I was almost penniless when I arrived, but the next day after I landed I was lucky enough to meet with a man whom I had encountered in Italy."

"This man, Father Lemuel, was a rather mysterious personage. He claimed to be a Greek, and called himself Philip Anselmo; but I have always had an idea that he had Romany blood in his veins, although he never admitted as much to me."

"Well, there are many sons of Egypt who have forsaken their tribe to live with the house-dwellers," the old man remarked. "All men are not alike, you know; the wild, free Gypsy life under the greenwood tree does not suit them; they prefer the crowded city to the tents of the Romany, but so long as they do not turn against their brothers, and do not try to do them an injury, no one has a right to find fault with them."

"This Greek makes the house-dwellers his prey, and when I told him frankly how I was situated he made a proposal to me to join him, as he said he needed just such a man as I was."

"It was a fortunate chance for you."

"He was playing the heavy swell, a retired Greek merchant, and wanted me to assume the part of a valet, his idea being, you see, that with my aid he would be able to do some good strokes of business."

"Yes, yes, the idea was a good one."

"And now he has found a pigeon whom he thinks it will be worth while to pluck. It is a woman who calls herself Camilla Selden, and is supposed to be a rich young Englishwoman, traveling for pleasure."

"Supposed to be?" questioned the old man.

"Is there then a doubt about the matter?" "Oh, yes; the Greek does not know the truth but I do. This woman is a Romany, a daughter of Egypt, the grandchild, in fact, of Isaac, the English Gypsy king."

"Ah, yes, I knew her when she was a child. Her father was a rich young Englishman, who married Hagar, old Isaac's daughter, and afterwards murdered her."

"Yes, she too left the tents of our people to live with the house-dwellers."

"I have heard that she became famous—I know not in what way—but I was told she had made a great store of gold."

"There is little doubt that it is the truth."

"And it is the daughter of the old Gypsy king that the Greek has picked out for a victim!" the old man queried with a sly chuckle, as though he was amused at the idea.

"The same, and it is because I am associated

with the Greek that I am puzzled," Sinfroid explained.

"Yes, yes, I understand," Father Lemuel remarked with a wise shake of his aged head. "You are a true son of Egypt, and you feel a little doubtful as to whether you ought to take part in this scheme which the Greek has got up on account of the woman being the granddaughter of the old Gypsy king."

"That is the truth. Ought I as a true Romany to have anything to do with it?"

The old man gave utterance to a dry laugh.

"Well, well, friend Crooked Finger, if the girl takes after her grandfather, the Greek will be apt to have his labor for his pains."

"But as a true son of Egypt am I not bound to warn the woman that the Greek has formed a plot against her?"

The old man pondered over the question for a few minutes before he answered, and then he shook his head in a grave way.

"No, no, I do not see why you should," he said. "She is of our race, it is true, but she has left the tents of her people and taken up her abode with the enemies of her tribe. She has willfully exposed herself to the schemes of the house-dwellers and if she is not wise enough to take care of herself, and comes to grief, she cannot lay the blame upon anybody, for she exposed herself to the peril."

"Then you do not think any of the tribe will blame me if I do not warn her?"

"No, I do not see how they can, and if the question should arise, most surely the judgment will be in your favor; that is, if you do not take any active part in the scheme; you must not aid the Greek to deceive her."

"I understand; and now on the other hand how ought I to act toward the Greek?" Sinfroid asked. "He aided me when I needed a friend, ought I then to warn him that this woman is not what he supposes her to be—that she has Gypsy blood in her veins, and the chances are that if he attempts to make her a victim he will not succeed."

"Oh, no, it would not be right to betray a daughter of Egypt," the old man replied.

"Let the Greek look out for himself. If he has not wit enough to discover that the woman is not what he supposes her to be, then he must put up with the consequences."

"You have no more right to betray the woman to the Greek than you have to reveal to her that the Greek is not what he represents himself to be."

"In brief, then, I must remain strictly neutral in the affair?"

"Yes, so you will escape all blame, no matter how the affair terminates."

Sinfroid reflected upon the subject for a few moments and then said, abruptly:

"You are right, Father Lemuel! You are fittingly named the Wise One, and I will take your advice. I am glad I met you, and I will enable you to return to England."

Then he gave the old man what money he had in his pocket and arranged to meet him on the morrow.

After this the two parted.

Sinfroid proceeded to the hotel and encountered the Greek in front of the building.

Anselmo had resumed his elegant attire, and lounged in front of the hotel, indulging in a cigar and at the same time keeping his eyes upon a couple of gentlemen who stood by the edge of the sidewalk, busy in conversation.

"There are two of the great men of the city," the Greek said as Sinfroid came up, directing his attention to the pair.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and it would be well for you to take a good look at them, for a bit of knowledge as to who they are may come in handy some time."

"Is that true?"

"Yes, indeed! The man nearest to us is the superintendent of police, and the other his right-hand man, the inspector."

"That is worth knowing!"

"They have sent a detective into the hotel and I am curious to know what they are up to."

"Here he comes now!" the Greek added abruptly.

From the ladies' entrance of the hotel came Detective Skelly and Miss Selden accompanied him.

"Thunder and lightning! is it possible that she has been arrested?" the Greek cried.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAGGIE'S DECISION.

DETECTIVE SKELLY conducted Miss Selden to the carriage by the side of which the two police officials stood, apparently introduced her to the pair, for she bowed and they raised their hats, then all four of them got into the coach and were driven away, much to the surprise of the Greek and the Gypsy, who watched the proceeding with the greatest interest.

"What does this mean?" cried Anselmo. "Can it be possible that there is anything wrong about her, and that she is not what she seems?"

"It is very strange!" the other exclaimed, fully as much in the dark in regard to this mysterious movement as his companion.

Leaving the two to speculate in regard to the matter, we will proceed to explain what had taken place.

As Detective Skelly was acquainted with all of the officers of the hotel, his entrance into the place excited no comment.

He strolled up to the counter, and took a look at the register, exchanging a few commonplace remarks with the clerk as he did so, then turned away, sauntered around the office for a few minutes, and then quietly made his way upstairs, no one taking any notice of where he had gone.

He proceeded straight to the room occupied by Miss Selden, and when Maggie opened the door, inquired for the young lady.

Miss Selden came forward.

Then the detective explained, in a very gentlemanly way, that he was a messenger from the superintendent of police, and said that that gentleman would be highly gratified if Miss Selden would come to Police Headquarters, as he wished to see her upon an important business matter.

The lady was surprised, and asked if there wasn't some mistake.

Detective Skelly assured her that there was not, and the young lady, after reflecting upon the subject for a few moments, said she had no objections to going.

Maggie evinced much more surprise than her mistress, and asked Miss Selden if she did not want her to go, too; but the detective quickly put a veto on this by saying that, although he knew of no reason why the maid should not go, yet, as there wasn't room in the coach, it would not be possible.

So Maggie, much to her disgust, was obliged to remain behind.

But, after the pair were gone, she hurried down-stairs and sent one of the bell-boys after her brother.

When Billy Chambers came, she hurriedly related to him what had occurred.

"The superintendent has probably got a pointer from Australia," the detective remarked.

"You think he has found out something about her?" Maggie exclaimed, the color mounting to her cheeks.

"Yes, I reckon he has."

"He has sent for her to come to Headquarters so as to have a talk with her about the matter?"

"Yes, that is the idea."

"The detective did not arrest her, you understand? All he did was to ask her if she would not oblige the superintendent of police by coming to Headquarters so he could have a talk with her upon important business."

"I comprehend; the superintendent always arranges these matters as quietly as possible for he does not like to have any trouble when he has to deal with a lady."

"And then another thing, as I explained to you once before, I think this is one of the affairs which had best be settled quietly. The chief may talk daggers, you know, but has no idea of using any."

"His game will be to either coax or bully her into a confession!" Maggie exclaimed, her eyes flashing.

"Exactly! As I said before, there may be reasons why the matter ought to be settled quietly, and then again it may be possible that the superintendent has not enough proof to warrant him in making an open arrest. He can ask the lady to come and talk to him, you know, and if she is unwise enough to allow him to persuade her that he knows all about the matter, and she makes a clean breast of it, then he will have something to go on."

"Well, all I have got to say is that it is a mighty mean piece of business!" the girl exclaimed, indignantly.

"Hello, hello! what do you mean by that?" Chambers exclaimed. "You are not going over to the side of the enemy, are you?"

"She is no enemy, but a dear, good girl and I know that there isn't anything wrong about her!"

"Well, you are a nice sort of a girl to take the part of a shadow, I must say!" the detective cried in amazement.

"I am very glad that I undertook this task, but I can just tell you, Billy Chambers, that I think it is a terribly mean business, and I never will do it again; but, as I said, I am glad I did it this time for I have made the acquaintance of as nice a lady as walks the earth this blessed night!"

"You have got it bad and no mistake!" the brother exclaimed.

"You may think this proceeding is all right but I don't!" Maggie cried, emphatically. "And I don't intend to have Miss Selden imposed upon even by so great a man as the superintendent of police."

"What are you going to do?" Billy Chambers asked in amazement.

"I am going to get a lawyer for her!"

"A lawyer?"

"Yes, and if the superintendent tries any

underhand game the lawyer will be on hand to interfere!"

"Well, well! upon my word! I must say that I never expected to see you make a move of this kind!"

"I wouldn't if I was not satisfied that the lady is all right, but as I am, I am not going to have her abused, so I will put a lawyer on the case inside of an hour, unless I have the worst kind of luck!"

"You will not find any man in his office at this time!"

"I know that!" Maggie retorted. "But it will be easy enough for me to find out where the lawyers live and I will go right to their houses."

"Oh, yes, but lawyers are not all home birds," the detective urged. "They go out at night to their clubs, and to the theaters, and a dozen different places."

"The men I am going after are first-class fellows, and so well known that I do not believe I will have any difficulty in finding them," Maggie replied, full of excitement.

"What lawyers are you going to get?"

"Have and Humpit!"

Billy Chambers laughed.

The girl had named the most successful firm of criminal lawyers in the city.

"Well, if anybody can do anything that pair can," the detective admitted.

The girl meant what she said, and in ten minutes more she was in a cab and on her way to execute her design.

The brother chuckled, for he was greatly pleased by the spirit displayed by the girl.

"She is chuckful of sand!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TOILS.

WHEN the hack arrived at Police Headquarters, Miss Selden was escorted into the private office of the chief.

The superintendent and the inspector accompanied her.

While the chief took his seat behind his desk, the inspector gallantly placed a chair for the lady.

"Now, I will be pleased if you will pay attention to what I am about to say, Miss Seguin," the superintendent remarked, very pleasantly.

"Miss Seguin!" exclaimed the lady.

"That is what I said."

"You have made a mistake in the name!"

"Oh, no, I think not."

"Indeed you have!" the girl persisted. "My name is not Seguin!"

"What is it?" asked the official, rather sharply, and he took up a pen, fixing his eyes intently on the face of the lady, while a frown wrinkled his forehead.

"I am called Camilla Selden," the girl replied, apparently not at all influenced by the stern manner of the police chief.

"You are called Camilla Selden," repeated the superintendent.

"Well, I have known of a good many people called by names which did not belong to them."

"Whether Camilla Selden is my right name or not, it is certain that Seguin is not my name!"

"I must warn you that you are now undergoing an official examination, and therefore you must be careful of what you say, for your words will be used against you!" the superintendent declared, in a very stern way.

"I am not at all alarmed!" Miss Selden declared, perfectly cool and self-possessed. "Your warning is needless, for I am not likely to say anything which had better be left unsaid."

This declaration rather surprised the chief, for it showed him that he had a more difficult task before him than he had anticipated.

"You have an extremely good opinion of yourself, I presume!" the official exclaimed, rather nettled by the manner and words of the girl.

"I trust the opinion I hold is warranted by the facts in the case," she remarked.

"I can judge better in regard to that when I know more of you," the superintendent observed.

"Well, do you persist in declaring that your name is not Carlotta Seguin?" he continued, after a slight pause.

"I do!"

"But you have been called Carlotta Seguin?" the chief persisted.

"Never!"

"In Australia?"

"Neither in Australia nor anywhere else."

"You have just come from Australia, though?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Would you have any objection in explaining to me who and what you are, and what business brings you to New York?"

And the tone of the police chief became decidedly mild as he uttered the question.

"Yes, sir, I would," the girl replied, immediately, greatly to the astonishment of the official.

Again the wrinkles darkened his brow and he glared sternly at Miss Selden.

"Do you decline to answer my questions?" he exclaimed.

"I do."

"Upon what grounds?"

"By what right do you ask?"

"I am the superintendent of police, and it is my business to ask."

"And I decline to answer. If you think I have committed any crime, arrest and try me! Although I am a woman, yet I understand enough about the law to comprehend that you can only proceed in a certain way, and you are wasting time, sir, in attempting to frighten me."

"If there is a charge against me, let me understand what it is so that I may have a chance to defend myself."

"Well and good! I will do so," the superintendent replied, perceiving he had been going on the wrong tack and that he could not hope to frighten the lady into a confession. "I believe you to be one Carlotta Seguin, sometimes known as the Australian Diamond Queen, who fled from that country carrying with her ten thousand pounds in Bank of England notes, the property of a certain gentleman who was unwise enough to intrust the money to your care for the purpose of purchasing the controlling interest in a gold-mine, which you declared to be an extremely valuable one, but in place of buying the mine you ran away with the money."

"My goodness! you are making me out to be a perfectly dreadful woman!" Miss Selden declared.

"The gentleman who suffered the loss of the money does not wish to prosecute you if it is possible for him to avoid it," the superintendent continued.

"All he wants is his money back, and he desires to get it with as little trouble as possible, so if you are disposed to be reasonable, the matter can be settled quietly."

"I am acting in this matter to oblige an Australian friend of mine in whose hands the case has been placed," the chief explained. "Of course, it isn't anything to me, but I think you will be very foolish if you are not willing to come to some arrangement."

"The man is disposed to be very liberal," the superintendent urged, after pausing for a moment to give Miss Selden a chance to speak, but finding that she did not take advantage of it he went on.

"He thinks that it is possible that you have spent some of the money, for a trip from Australia to New York is a costly one, and so he is not disposed to stand on a hundred dollars or so. He does not expect you to pay back what you have spent, and is willing to lose that, provided you give up the balance."

"He is liberal indeed," Miss Selden said, smilingly.

"Yes, he certainly is, and, as I said before, you will be acting very foolishly indeed if you do not accept his offer."

"If I was the woman whom you take me to be I should certainly do so, but I am not."

The superintendent looked disappointed.

"It is the truth, I assure you," the girl continued. "And after you make an investigation you will find it to be so."

"You may rest assured that I shall not be satisfied with your denial," the chief declared, "but shall put all the machinery of my office at work to discover the truth."

"I court the most rigid investigation!" Miss Selden exclaimed, promptly.

"There is some mistake in the matter. I am not Carlotta Seguin, never was known by any such name, and in fact never even heard of such a person."

"That I have just come from Australia is true, but that does not prove that I am the woman you take me to be, and as for possessing ten thousand pounds, it is more money than I ever had in my life, and more than I ever hope to have."

"I don't expect you to believe me, of course, and you are quite welcome to investigate all you like, but I don't think I am bound to tell you anything about myself."

The chief was bothered. He had tried an old trick, and to his surprise it had not worked at all.

It was but seldom he was so completely baffled.

"Don't you think it would be the wisest course for you to give me a full account of yourself?" the police chief urged.

"No, I do not," Miss Selden replied in a tone which plainly showed that she did not have any doubt about the matter.

"But don't you see that if you make it plain to me that you are not this Carlotta Seguin it will save you a lot of trouble?" the superintendent argued.

"Oh, I do not think there is any need for me to feel at all uneasy about the matter," the girl replied in the most matter-of-fact way.

At this point the interview was interrupted by the entrance of the officer in charge of the door.

"Lawyer Have wishes to see you for a few minutes on an important business matter," the officer said.

The superintendent and the lawyer belonged to the same political party—were leaders of note, and as an exciting campaign was in progress, the chief naturally believed that the lawyer wanted to consult him in regard to some important political move, so he asked Miss Selden to excuse him for a few moments, and then gave orders for the admission of the lawyer.

Soon Counselor Have made his appearance—a portly gentleman, with a commanding figure and an imposing presence.

He was elaborately dressed, and the huge diamond which sparkled in his snowy shirt-front was of the kind which is popularly known as a "headlight."

"How do you do, superintendent?" exclaimed the lawyer, as he greeted the police chief with a respectful salutation. "You must forgive my intrusion, and the importance of the business must be my excuse."

"This is the young lady, Miss Selden, I presume?" and then he favored the lady with a bow even more elaborate than the one he had bestowed upon the official.

The superintendent gazed at the lawyer in amazement, for he was taken completely by surprise.

"I have the honor to appear for this lady," the lawyer continued, with another polite bow, addressed to the chief of police.

"You see, my dear superintendent, a friend of this lady happened to become possessed of the knowledge that some sort of a charge had been brought against her, and feeling sure that there could not be any foundation for it, immediate measures were taken so that Miss Selden should be incommoded as little as possible."

"Of course I am not aware how far matters have progressed, nor of the nature of the accusation brought against her, but I am prepared to give bail for her appearance to any reasonable amount, five or ten thousand dollars, say, which I presume will be ample."

The superintendent was decidedly annoyed, and his face plainly betrayed his feelings, but Miss Selden did not seem to be particularly surprised.

She conjectured that it was her lover, Alexander Boudinot, who had come so promptly to her rescue, but she wondered how it was that he had so quickly arrived at a knowledge of her situation.

"Well, really, the case is not in a shape calculated to call for the assistance of a legal gentleman like yourself, counselor," the superintendent said, slowly.

"I beg your pardon, superintendent, but I don't think I exactly understand the situation," the lawyer exclaimed, pretending to be puzzled. "If the lady has been arrested, and you are about to send her before a magistrate to be committed, I am ready to offer bail, as I said."

"Well, in the exercise of my office it is necessary to stretch the law a little sometimes," the chief admitted. "I proposed to detain this lady until I satisfied myself in regard to the truth of a charge brought against her, but if you are willing to be personally responsible for her appearance when she is required, I will release her."

The lawyer replied that he would be proud to assume the responsibility, and so Miss Selden was dismissed.

In a carriage at the door she found Maggie Chambers, and discovered that to the detective's sister she was indebted for the lawyer's aid.

"The mouse set the lion free!" Maggie cried.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MENDICANT.

On the way to the hotel Miss Selden related the particulars of her interview with the chief of police, the lawyer expressing his desire to know all about the matter.

"The superintendent was indulging in a fishing excursion," Counselor Have remarked when the recital was completed.

"That is a technical expression," he explained. "And signified that in your case he had no proof that you were the person, Miss Carlotta Seguin, who was wanted, but having in some way got the suspicion that you were the party, he caused you to submit to an examination in hopes that you might admit that you were sailing under false colors."

"The attempt was not a success," Miss Selden replied. "I am not Carlotta Seguin—in fact, I never even heard of her, and why any one should have an idea that I am anything but what I represent myself to be is a mystery to me."

"It is a case of mistaken identity," the lawyer observed. "You came from Australia; this Miss Seguin took flight from that country also; by some mistake you became confounded with her; and the probabilities are that you have been watched by some of these police shadows ever since you arrived in the city."

Miss Selden appeared to be annoyed by this statement, and a shade appeared upon her brow.

"I had not the slightest suspicion of any such thing!" she exclaimed. "And it is extremely disagreeable for me to think that my footsteps have been watched, but now that the subject

has been brought to my mind, I remember that on a few occasions I have noticed a man a little distance away who seemed to be paying some attention to my movements, but as the idea never entered my head that I was being watched, I did not allow the circumstance to disturb me."

"You undoubtedly spotted the spy," the lawyer declared. "In some way suspicion was directed to you. It was one of those unaccountable blunders which the police agents make sometimes, and it is really astonishing how stupid these smart fellows can be once in a while, and when the average police shadow, as these spies are often termed, gets an idea into his head, it is an extremely hard matter to get it out."

"Yes, I have noticed that," Maggie exclaimed. "As my brother is a detective, I take a great deal of interest in such matters, and usually read all the particulars in the most careful manner."

"I presume you have noticed then that these bloodhounds of the law sometimes make very stupid blunders?" Counselor Have observed.

"Oh, yes, and often I could plainly see that they were entirely wrong in their surmises, and it was a wonder to me how they could possibly arrive at the conclusion to which they did."

"Men get in nets, so to speak," the lawyer explained. "They get used to doing business in a certain way, and it is hard work for them to change."

By this time the coach had arrived at the hotel, and so the conversation came to an end.

The lawyer took leave of Miss Selden, and his parting injunction was to send for him immediately if the police showed any disposition to trouble her.

"It is extremely annoying to me this idea that a watch has been placed upon my movements," Miss Selden remarked to Maggie when the two had reached their apartment and seated themselves after removing their hats and cloaks.

"Yes, it is not pleasant."

"I was beginning to have a suspicion too that some one was watching me, for, as I said, I have noticed a man who appeared to be paying more attention to me than a stranger would be apt to do, but when the thought came to me that he was playing the spy I was not willing to believe it could be so, for I did not know of any reason why any one should trouble themselves to watch me."

"You understand now though," Maggie remarked.

"Oh, yes, and if the watch is kept up I shall take measures to baffle the spy," Miss Selden declared.

"You are aware that I am in search of a certain party, and I think I have discovered the man I seek, but I am not sure in regard to the matter, for I have not been able to see him, although I have tried to gain an interview."

"He is out of town, the people in the house say, but as I had an idea that this was only a subterfuge—that the man was in the city but did not desire to see any strangers—I have kept a close watch on the house, thinking I might be able to ascertain whether he was there or not."

"Did you succeed?" Maggie asked, her curiosity excited by the recital.

"No, but it is my impression that the people in the house spoke the truth when they said he was absent."

"I have a strange feeling about the matter," Miss Selden said, abruptly, after pausing for a moment.

"It is my vow to hunt this man down, and yet now that there is a chance of meeting him face to face, I seem to shrink from the ordeal."

"Oh, I can understand the feeling well enough!" Maggie exclaimed. "The meeting is going to be a disagreeable one and it is only natural that you should not be anxious to have it take place, although it is something that cannot be avoided."

"Yes, I hesitate as the bather does on the brink of the ocean wave which seems to threaten to chill his blood into insensibility, but after the plunge is over all is well."

"That is the right way to look at the matter. The task must be accomplished and the quicker you set about it the better."

"My resolution is taken!" Miss Selden declared, "and henceforth there will not be any hesitation on my part."

"To-morrow night I shall resume my watch and as soon as I discover that the man I seek can be seen I will quickly gain speech with him."

The conversation then turned to subjects which are not of any interest to our readers and we will not relate it.

On the following evening Miss Selden arrayed herself in a plain, dark costume, and about eight o'clock left the hotel.

She crossed Broadway and proceeded down that thoroughfare until she came to the Park, in which she turned.

Third avenue was her destination, where she intended taking the Elevated Road to Harlem.

As she went on she did not pay any particular attention to her surroundings, so she was not aware that an old, white-headed man who had been standing on Broadway opposite to the hotel when she came out had followed her footsteps.

When she entered the Park he hastened onward and took a cross-path so as to intercept her.

Miss Selden was walking slowly, so the old man had no difficulty in performing this movement.

"Cross the old man's hand with silver, pretty lady, and he will tell you your future!" he exclaimed, as the young woman came up to him.

Miss Selden halted and cast an earnest glance into the face of the speaker.

"How comes it that you have the gift of fortune-telling?" she asked.

"Because I am the seventh son of a seventh son," the old man replied. "And then, too, I come of the race of star-gazers; my people are of that land where the mystic art of divining the future has flourished from the earliest ages, the land of Khem—mighty Egypt!"

"You are an Egyptian?"

"Nay, not so am I called, although it is the boast of my people that we are the children of Egypt; but it is long years since any of my race dwelt in the land where falls the shadows of the pyramids," the old man explained. "We are now called Bohemians, and, in English-speaking countries, Gypsies."

"Yes, I understand; but, have you not wandered far from your people? Are there Gypsies in this country?"

"Very few, I believe; but I cannot speak of the matter from my own knowledge, for I am all alone here."

Miss Selden carefully surveyed the miserable clothes of the other, and then she shook her head.

"To judge from your appearance, the world has not used you very well," she said.

"That is the truth; misfortune and my humble self have walked hand in hand now for many a long day," the old man answered. "I am here in a strange country, far from the land where I was born, and unless I meet with some one who will aid me to cross the stormy seas it is not likely I will ever see the white cliffs of England again."

"Do not give yourself any uneasiness on that account," Miss Selden remarked. "I will gladly aid you to return to your own country. How much money do you require?"

And as she put the question she took out her pocket-book, which, contrary to the usual custom of women, she did not carry in her hand.

An expression of astonishment appeared on the face of the old man.

"Is it possible, lady, that you will be so generous to me—a man who is an entire stranger to you?"

"Yes, it is so; I will give you the money, so that you can return to your home."

"You are truly generous!" the old man declared, with an approving shake of his gray head.

"But is it wise to bestow your bounty thus freely upon a stranger?" he continued. "You do not know whether I am worthy or unworthy. I may be all that is bad, and my tale that I am a stranger in this country, far from home and friends, a lie from beginning to end."

"I am not willing to believe that it is so," Miss Selden replied.

"I flatter myself that I have lived long enough in the world to be something of a judge of mankind, and I am satisfied that you speak the truth."

"It will take a large sum to enable me to reach my home."

"How much?"

And the lady opened her pocket-book.

"Twenty-five dollars—perhaps thirty."

Miss Selden handed three ten-dollar bills to the old man.

"There is the sum, and if it is not enough, you are welcome to more," she said.

"Ah, you are indeed beautiful Hagar's daughter, and a true princess of Little Egypt!" the old man cried.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WARNING.

CAMILLA did not betray any particular surprise at being thus addressed, only smiled, and cast a quick glance around as though she was desirous of seeing if there was danger of any one overhearing the conversation, but there was no one within earshot, so she was able to speak freely.

"You know me?" she questioned.

"Yes."

"And this appeal to my bounty was designed as a test?"

"It was."

"Did you think that I would not recognize you?"

"No, I felt sure that you would, for you have your mother's keen eyes, and though it is a good ten years since you have seen me, yet I have not changed much in that time."

"Very little, indeed, and you are quite right

in thinking that I would not fail to recognize you, but I presume the thought was in your mind that I might not be willing to remember you."

"Daughter of Beautiful Hagar, I will not lie to you!" the old Gypsy exclaimed. "I did think so."

"It is many years since you lived with the tribe, your father was not of our blood, and almost all your life has been spent with the house-dwellers; why, then, should it not be probable that your heart should be turned away from your mother's people?"

"Because blood is thicker than water, and though half the current which flows in my veins is not the crimson stream of the children of Egypt, yet my heart is as warm toward those of my mother's blood as though both my parents were of the ancient race that originally came from the land of the pyramids."

"You are a true daughter of the tent-dwellers, and when I tell the old Gypsy king, your grandfather, of this meeting, and explain to him how true you are to your people, he will be proud that you are of his race."

"And now explain how you happened to discover me—was it by accident or design?"

"No—accident!" the old man replied. "I was told by a certain party that you were in the city, and although he did not reveal to me where you were, yet it was an easy matter for me to track him and so discover."

"Crooked Finger was the man!" Camilla exclaimed.

"Yes, and he is an arch rogue whom it would be well for you to keep an eye upon."

"I am not likely to trust him, for his reputation was never good, but I do not think he will dare to attempt to harm me, for, though he may play the rascal as far as the house-dwellers are concerned, yet he knows the power and length of the Gypsy arm too well to do anything which may bring down upon him the vengeance of the tribe."

"If he is as wise as I take him to be, he will not dare to brave the anger of the sons of Egypt!" the old man declared, with a weighty shake of his head.

"And now confess, Father Lemuel, you put yourself in my way in order to try me, did you not?"

"Oh, yes, that is the truth."

"And you are not in want?"

"Yes, yes, I am; that is true enough, but not quite so badly as I said," he replied, and then he told the story of his shipwreck, with the account of his meeting with Crooked Finger, and he did not hesitate to relate all the particulars of his interview with the Gypsy.

"So this Greek gentleman whom he serves is a rascal," Camilla observed, thoughtfully. "I suspected as much when I first learned that Crooked Finger was in his service."

Then she told how she and the Gypsy had met.

"He is a rascal, that same Crooked Finger, no doubt about that, but, as I said—and as you can plainly see—he hesitates to take any action against you."

"Yes, I understand."

"And when I counseled him to play a neutral part, I had determined to see you myself, and if I found that your heart was warm toward those who were of the same race as your mother, then I would reveal everything to you."

"In this case then the truth of the old adage that those who do right shall be richly rewarded is amply proven," Miss Selden remarked with a smile.

"Yes, and it is ever so in this world!" the old man declared. "But you stood the test nobly, and I am thankful too, for it would have been a sore blow to me if I had found you faithless to your mother's race."

"I should be ungrateful indeed if I were, for I have never experienced anything but kindness at their hands. And so this Greek thinks to make me a victim?" and the girl's lip curled in scorn as she uttered the words.

"That is his idea."

"He will find it a difficult one to carry out, I fancy!" Camilla declared.

"And even if I had not been warned I doubt if he could have succeeded, for I am no childish school-girl, but a woman who has fought her way through the world for years, and in the course of my career I have encountered many difficulties and perils, and so have learned to take care of myself."

"Any one who is a judge of human nature could tell from your face that you are not one who would be apt to fall an easy victim, and then too if you need assistance you have but to say the word and your Gypsy brothers will be prompt to come to your aid." And then the old man went on to relate how an hour or so after he had parted from Crooked Finger he had met with some members of the tribe.

"A band of Gypsies had crossed the ocean to try their luck in America, and were now encamped in a vacant lot in the upper part of the city, the district to the north of Central Park, which was not yet built up."

"Some of the best men in our tribe are with the band," the old man said in conclusion.

"Men who can be trusted, and as they have faith in me they will be guided by my advice."

"I shall be glad to avail myself of their services," Camilla said, thoughtfully, and then, yielding to a sudden impulse, she revealed the secret of the mission of vengeance which she had taken upon herself.

Father Lemuel listened attentively, and when the recital was finished he warmly expressed his approval.

"Your task is one which commends itself to the heart of every true son of Egypt!" he declared. "And when you have satisfied yourself that you have found the right man—when you ascertain beyond a doubt that you have found the murderer of your mother, do not attempt to get justice from the house-dwellers, for their laws are so formed that if a man has plenty of money he can generally afford to laugh the laws to scorn."

"Yes, that is true," Camilla observed. "My experience has convinced me that it is a hard matter to put a wealthy man in such a position that the sword of justice will descend upon him."

"Leave the murderer to us!" Father Lemuel exclaimed.

"First be certain that he is the man who committed the murder, and then call upon the sons of Egypt to execute vengeance upon him. No matter how much money he has, no matter whether he is the lowliest man in the land, or stands second to none, the wanderers will strike him down; the work will be done so secretly, too, that none will be able to tell who did the deed."

"Yes, I know that it is the custom of the sons of Egypt to take vengeance into their own hands, and it is but seldom they fail when they seek to execute justice upon a wrong-doer," Camilla remarked.

"As yet I have not concluded what course to pursue if I find I have hunted down the murderer of my mother; but as soon as I satisfy my mind on that point I will consult you, for I have faith that you will advise me correctly."

"In the tribe I am called the Wise One," the old man observed. "For years I have borne that title, and men who know me well say that it does not flatter me, and, daughter, you can depend upon it that I shall counsel you to the best of my ability."

"Oh, I have no doubts in regard to that," Camilla affirmed.

"And this money which you so generously bestowed upon me—I really do not need it to take me home, for now that I have met the band I shall remain with them."

And the old man tendered the money to Camilla.

"No, keep it; I have plenty, and will never miss it; and then, too, it is possible that it may be necessary to place a watch upon this Greek, and the money will serve to pay the expenses."

"Yes, that is true," Father Lemuel remarked, with an approving nod. "Well, I will keep it, and you can rest assured that I will make good use of it."

Then the old man gave Camilla directions how to reach the Gypsy camp, and the two parted.

Father Lemuel proceeded toward Broadway, and Camilla went on in the direction of Third avenue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PLOTTERS AT WORK.

A HUNDRED paces away two men stood in the shadow cast by a clump of trees, which afforded them such ample concealment that when Miss Selden glanced around at the beginning of her interview with the mendicant, she failed to see them.

But the men were so far away that it was not possible for them to overhear the conversation between the two, although they could plainly distinguish their actions.

The pair are no strangers to our readers, for it was the Greek, Anselmo, and the confidence-man, Sly Sid, who were keeping their eyes upon the girl.

Anselmo was attired as usual, but the generally dapper and sleek-looking Englishman had assumed a disguise which made a wonderful difference in his appearance.

He was now rigged out like a Bowery boy, in a coarse, rough suit, with a cap pulled down over his eyes, and as he was a natural-born actor, he had assumed the peculiar swagger common to the class generally known as "toughs."

So complete was his disguise that it would have required a keen observer indeed to detect that he was not what he appeared to be.

The two had been shadowing Miss Selden, and when she was accosted by the mendicant they took refuge in the shade of the trees so as to watch the girl's actions.

"The old man looks as if he had been playing in hard luck," the crook remarked, in a jocular way.

"Yes, and he has stopped the girl with the idea that he will be able to get a few pennies out of her," Anselmo observed.

"I think he is going to make a strike!" the Englishman declared. "He apparently has man-

aged to interest her, for she is stopping to talk with him."

"Well, if the first beggar that comes along can succeed in working upon her feelings so as to induce her to open her pocketbook, it is a sign, I think, that we stand a good chance to succeed in our little game."

"Oh, yes, a very good sign indeed!"

And then the two kept quiet until they beheld the girl put her hand in her pocket, when they immediately conjectured that she was after money.

"Aha! the old fellow is going to do the trick!" Sly Sid exclaimed.

"Yes, she is going to produce her 'leather,' and allow that old fraud to walk away with some of the contents."

"Well, I gave her credit for having better sense," the Englishman remarked. "But I suppose the appearance of the old chap has touched her heart, for he looks as if he needed money badly enough."

The pair were not particularly surprised to see her bestow alms upon the old mendicant, but when they beheld her give him bills, they were amazed.

"Hi! do you see that?" Sly Sid exclaimed. "Blow me tight, if this ain't an astonisher! It's 'flimseys' she is giving the old bloke!"

"Yes, three or four of them, too!"

"She must have plenty of money, or else she would never throw it away in this fashion."

"No doubt about it!" the Greek asserted.

"We must do our best to win the trick!" the other declared. "This liberality on her part would seem to argue that we can make a big haul if we can do the job."

"Oh, yes, for if she hadn't plenty of money she would never throw it away in this fashion."

As will be seen from this conversation neither of the two had any suspicion that the aged beggar was an old acquaintance of Camilla's, and from the fact that she gave him money so readily they fancied she was one who could be easily imposed upon.

It is a well-known fact that shrewd men often make blunders of this kind; their keenness leading them to draw a wrong conclusion.

After the interview ended and Camilla took her way to the Elevated Railway station on Third avenue, the pair followed, discreetly, taking care to keep on the other side of the street.

Miss Selden ascended the stairs, and entered the station. The watchers went up the stairs also, but they did not pass the ticket-agent until the train drew up at the station, then they bought their tickets and passed the doorkeeper just in time to get on the train.

By this maneuver they avoided all chance of the lady's discovering that she was followed.

The pair took seats by the door in the next car to the one which Miss Selden had entered so as to be in readiness to follow her when she got out.

They felt pretty certain in regard to her destination though, for they had watched her before.

As they anticipated she did not leave the train until the end of the road was reached, and then she took the "cross-town cable car."

And after she was within the vehicle the two got on the rear platform, taking care to stand upon opposite sides of the entrance as though they were strangers.

They thought she would get off at a certain street, and when the car approached this point they kept their eyes upon her, so that the moment she signaled to the conductor they noticed the movement and got off before the car had fairly come to a halt.

The pair knew exactly how to act to avoid the girl's observation, for the Greek had played the spy upon her before and understood what course she would take, so when Camilla proceeded on her way, turning into the first side street, which was a lonely one, more like a country road than a city avenue, she did not see anything to indicate that she was being watched.

Neither of the two men were in sight.

They had hurried back to the next street, and gone around the block so as to intercept the girl.

This movement was performed so neatly that Sly Sid was in waiting on the corner when Camilla came to it.

The Greek was concealed in a doorway, a little distance down the street.

The girl noticed the man lounging on the corner and her quick eyes immediately noted that he was an extremely disreputable-looking fellow, but such personages are far too common in a big city like New York to call for any particular notice.

Camilla was proceeding at a moderate pace, deeply occupied by her own thoughts, for she had determined to carry out a certain course of action that night if it was possible, and so she was vastly astonished when the shabbily-dressed man stepped forward and accosted her.

"Say, miss, can't yer give a poor fellow the price of a bed?" he exclaimed, with the true pro-

professional beggar's whine. "I am awfully down on my luck, don't you see, and a little cash from you will help me along—you'll never miss it!"

He leered in an insolent way in the face of the girl as he concluded his speech, so as to give her the idea that if she did not feel like yielding to his demand he might proceed to violence.

It was a lonely spot, no one was within sight, and a better place for a footpad to commit a robbery would be hard to find.

Camilla was a stout-hearted girl, though, and she had no idea of allowing the fellow to either wheedle or frighten her out of her money.

"I haven't anything for you," she replied, and as she spoke she looked the man straight in the eye, gazing at him in such a way as to give him to understand that she was not at all afraid of him.

Then the Englishman advanced a step so as to plant himself directly in the path of the girl, thus rendering it difficult for her to proceed.

"Haven't you made some mistake about that?" he exclaimed, in an insolent way. "I think that if you look in your pocketbook you will find some change that you can spare—a dollar or two will be enough; I ain't striking you for no fortune, you know."

"I have nothing for you, sir," Camilla replied, in a firm and decided tone. "And I will trouble you to move out of my way so I can go on."

"Oh, that ain't no way to talk, you know!" Sly Sid exclaimed, in a surly way.

"Wot do you take me for? Do you s'pose I am going to be satisfied with any sich put-off as this 'ere? Come! shell out a dollar or two, and don't drive me to do something desperate."

"You will not dare!" Camilla cried.

"Oh, won't I?" the fellow replied, with an ugly sneer. "When you say that it shows that you don't know much about wot kind of a man I am. I kin be awful now, I tell yer, if things don't go for to suit me, and if you ain't anxious for to git inter trouble, you had better shell out some money mighty quick!"

"I will not give you a penny!" the girl exclaimed, indignantly. "And if you do not quickly take yourself off I will call for assistance!"

"And a heap of good that will do you!" the other retorted.

"Can't you see for yourself that there isn't anybody 'round, and if you tried to cut up rusty in that way, couldn't I take you by the wind-pipe and give you a squeeze which would speedily choke all the holler out of you?"

And as she finished the sentence the speaker extended his fist in a menacing way.

And this was the Greek's cue to appear.

"What are you about, you scoundrel?" he cried as he came up, and catching Sly Sid by the coat-collar he forced him to one side.

"Let go of me!" the Englishman cried, pretending to be in a terrible rage, then he wrenched himself loose and drew a knife, but the Greek immediately covered him with a revolver.

A moment Sly Sid glared at the pistol and then, with a howl of dismay, he took to his heels and ran away as though frightened out of his wits.

"Aha!" cried the Greek with a contemptuous laugh. "I thought the production of a weapon would speedily take all ideas of fighting out of the fellow, and I was correct in my judgment."

Then he bowed to the lady.

CHAPTER XIX. FOUND AT LAST.

THE Greek appeared surprised as he looked upon Camilla, then he lifted his hat and, with a polite bow, said:

"If I mistake not I have the pleasure of residing in the same hotel as yourself."

"The Hoffman House?" the girl said in an extremely innocent way.

She understood the game now as well as though she had planned it.

The rough who had accosted her was in the pay of the Greek, and he had placed himself in her way so that the chief actor in the plot would have an opportunity to come to her rescue and thus produce a favorable impression.

And now that she comprehended the plot she took a malicious pleasure in going on as if she had no suspicion that anything was wrong.

"I thought I could not be mistaken, for I have had the pleasure of seeing you in the corridors on several occasions."

"Yes, now that you recall the matter to my mind I think I have seen you in the hotel."

"Oh, certainly, madam, no doubt about it, and I assure you that it gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to be of some slight assistance to you, and I will be extremely happy too if you will permit the acquaintanceship thus strangely begun to be continued. I am a stranger in the city and so could hardly hope to secure an introduction to you in the ordinary way."

"Permit me to offer you my card," and the gentleman, with another polite bow, tendered the bit of pasteboard.

"I also am a stranger in the city," Camilla said with a charming smile as she took the card. "And so, I presume, it would have been a diffi-

cult matter for us to have become acquainted if it had not been for this accidental meeting."

"I assure you, madam, I am extremely pleased that I was fortunate enough to be able to be of service to you!" Anselmo declared with another elaborate bow. "I am a retired merchant from Athens, Greece, traveling for pleasure, and as I am an entire stranger in the city, knowing absolutely no one excepting a few gentlemen whose acquaintance I have made since coming to the hotel, it would give me great pleasure indeed to be ranked in the list of your friends."

"Well, sir, after this little incident it would be ungrateful for me to treat you as a stranger, for if you had not come so timely to my aid an unpleasant scene might have resulted."

And the girl, though speaking the truth, deceived the Greek.

He imagined that she meant it would be unpleasant for her, but her true meaning was that it would be disagreeable for the tough who had stopped her way, for she had thrust her hand into the pocket of the coat she wore, not to grasp her pocketbook, as Sly Sid had imagined when he perceived the motion, but to lay hold of a small revolver which she carried there, and as it was a self-cocking weapon, requiring but a single pull on the trigger to send the death-dealing ball, it was perfectly apparent that the moment she produced the weapon the tough would have been at her mercy.

The Greek did not know this though, nor had he a suspicion that Miss Selden, although appearing to be a gentle, modest, retiring girl, was in reality a woman of dauntless courage, of vast experience in the ways of the world, and altogether about the last person in the city whom he would have selected for a victim if he had known her as she really was.

"Yes, undoubtedly, for I could see that the fellow was disposed to be ugly. He had been drinking, I think, and when one of these low fellows allows liquor to get the best of him there is no telling what villainy he may not commit."

"It was very fortunate indeed that you happened to approach as you did, and I am sure I will never forget your kindness," Camilla remarked in her sweetest tone.

The Greek was hugely delighted, for the girl was playing her part so well that he made the mistake of thinking he had made an extremely favorable impression.

"Oh, do not mention it, I beg!" he exclaimed, with another elaborate bow. "I am truly charmed to be able to be of service, and deem myself especially fortunate that I have been able to make your acquaintance."

It was now Camilla's turn to bow, which she did in a very graceful way, and she pretended to be a little flurried by the compliment.

"I was on my way to visit a gentleman who lives a few blocks higher up—one of my hotel acquaintances," the Greek explained. "But, as I am not in any hurry, I shall be pleased to act as your escort, if you will permit me."

"Oh, I will not trouble you," the girl replied. "I have only a little way to go, and I do not think there is any danger of my being molested."

"Well, I hardly think there is; but I will not detain you longer, and I trust you will not allow this to be the end of our acquaintanceship."

"Oh, no; I shall be pleased to see you at the hotel."

"I am extremely obliged to you, and I shall give myself the pleasure of an early call."

And then, with a bow, the Greek departed.

He crossed the street and went on up the avenue as though he really was on his way to make a call.

Camilla, after responding to the Greek's salutation, proceeded up the street, but after going a hundred feet or so she cast a sly glance over her shoulder in order to see what had become of the gentleman.

He was just disappearing around the corner, and in a moment was lost to sight.

"A very excellent trick, indeed!" Camilla exclaimed, as she proceeded onward at a slow pace. "And, keen as I think myself, I would undoubtedly have been deceived if I had not been put on my guard by Father Lemuel."

"But I do not think the plotters would have profited much by the affair, for, as soon as they began to develop their game, I would surely have discovered that they were trying to make a victim of me."

Then again the girl cast a quick glance over her shoulder.

"I wonder if this man, or any of his gang, are trying to shadow me, as a detective would say," she murmured.

"It is very evident that my footsteps have been watched, or else they never would have been able to try a trick of this kind upon me."

"It is strange, too," she added, after a moment's reflection, "I, the hunter, have in turn been hunted, and I have been so intent upon my chase that I never took note that my footsteps were being spied upon. In fact, I never had the slightest suspicion that any such game would be attempted, but now that I understand what is going on, I will take good care the scamps shall not watch me any more."

And, acting upon this idea, after going a couple of blocks, the girl suddenly turned and

retraced her steps, then she went into a side street, and after going along it a short distance, wheeled around and came back again to the street in which she had originally been, so if there had been a shadower on her track he would undoubtedly have been detected by the keen-witted girl.

Her efforts were not productive of any results, and so she came to the conclusion that her suspicions were unfounded; she was not watched.

"The little farce having been played to the satisfaction of the plotters, they have gone about their business!" Camilla exclaimed, with an expression of scorn upon her handsome features.

"I can proceed without being haunted by the fear that there are spies upon my track."

Having come to this conclusion, the girl resumed her original course.

Then, as she walked slowly onward, a sudden thought came which caused her to laugh.

"If I have been watched—and there is not a doubt in my mind that I have been, and carefully, too—the spies and their master must have been perplexed indeed by my apparently aimless wanderings."

"Here I have been promenading up one side of the street, and down upon the other, without any particular object, and their wonder must have been excited as to what I was after, for I certainly appeared to have no definite purpose."

"Of course it was not possible for them to guess that I was waiting for a favorable moment to carry out a certain scheme."

By this time the girl had reached a lonely part of the street, where the houses were few and far between.

Again she glanced behind to be sure that no lurking spy was on her track.

There was a long stretch of open space which afforded no concealment to a watcher, and as no one was in sight, Camilla was satisfied that she was not shadowed.

At the next house, a handsome cottage, she halted and gazed in through the parlor windows, the curtains of which were not drawn, and her eyes fell upon the figure of a middle-aged man.

"At last I have hunted him down!" she cried in hoarse accents.

CHAPTER XX.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

THE gentleman upon whom the girl gazed through the window was a man of fifty or thereabouts, well-built, but inclined to stoutness; he was dark-complexioned, with a short, curly black beard and hair of the same hue, but here and there in both beard and hair the silver threads of age were beginning to appear.

He was well-dressed, and looked like a man who had prospered.

Seated in an easy-chair, near the center of the room, under the chandelier which afforded light to the apartment, he was reading a newspaper, and was, apparently, much interested in what he read.

With dilated eyes and parted lips, her heart beating with unwonted quickness, and the blood coursing wildly in her veins, Camilla stood as if spell-bound and gazed upon the gentleman, who was all unconscious of the scrutiny.

"At last—at last!" she exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, her voicesounding strangely unnatural in her ears.

"There cannot be any mistake about the matter—he is the man I seek!"

"He agrees exactly with the description! If I had met him in a crowded street I am sure I would have known him."

"There are dark lines upon his brow. Has remorse wrung his soul for the crime which he committed years ago?"

"I am the agent of justice—the minister of vengeance, who is fated to strike terror to his guilty soul, and yet, now that the opportunity presents itself to me, I shrink from the task which I undertook so willingly."

And this was the truth.

A great struggle was going on in the girl's mind, and it was a good ten minutes before she could nerve herself to ascend the steps and ring the bell.

The gentleman never lifted his eyes from the newspaper during this time.

But when the sound of the bell fell upon his ears, he laid the journal upon the center table and came to the door.

"Mr. James Monteth?" Camilla said, and never to her imagination did her voice sound so strangely.

"That is my name," the gentleman replied.

"Can I have the favor of a private interview with you?" she asked.

"Certainly! step this way, please," and he proceeded to the parlor.

Camilla closed the door and followed him.

The entry was dimly lighted, so that the master of the mansion did not get a good view of the girl's face until after reaching the center of the parlor, when he placed a chair for her accommodation and said:

"Please be seated."

At the same moment he turned, and the face of the visitor was revealed to him, every fea-

ture rendered distinct by the light of the chandelier.

A look of amazement appeared upon his countenance as he closely studied the features of the girl.

It was but for a moment, though, and then the man remembered himself, and the expression of surprise vanished.

Camilla stood like a statue, her face deadly pale and her eyes flashing lurid fires.

Every nerve within the girl's body was quivering with excitement, and yet for many weary weeks she had schooled herself to meet the excitement of such a scene as this.

But now all the carefully-prepared programme which she had formed was forgotten.

All she could remember was that the man before her was the one who had committed a horrible crime, and that he was her father.

"You call yourself James Monteth, but it is not your name!" she exclaimed, with the air of an accusing angel.

A look of pain appeared on the face of the man, and a low sigh escaped from his lips; then, with an effort, he composed himself and said:

"You are right; it is not my name."

"Once you were called James Carden!"

"Correct! I was once so called."

"And you are a fugitive from the law—a guilty man who fled like a thief in the night, so as to escape the punishment justly due for his crime!" Camilla exclaimed, her cheeks now flushed with excitement.

"No, you are wrong; I am not a guilty man, neither did I seek safety in flight, as you and all the world erroneously suppose!" the gentleman declared, calmly, and in a tone full of weighty import.

"What?" exclaimed Camilla, in amazement. "Is it possible that you deny the truth of the story which denounces you as a cold-blooded murderer?"

"I do most decidedly, and if you will be seated, and listen to my story in patience, perhaps I may be able to convince you that I am not so black as I have been painted," and there was a pathetic ring in the speaker's tone which went straight to the heart of the girl.

Tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, would to Heaven that you could do so, but I fear it is impossible!" she cried, as she sunk into a chair.

"Listen patiently, and then judge me as you would like to be judged if you were situated as I now am," Carden—as we shall now call him—said in deep and solemn tones.

"Oh, you may rest assured that I will earnestly try with all my heart to do you justice!" the girl exclaimed.

"Yes, I ought to be able to expect not only justice but mercy from your hands, if you are the person I take you to be," the gentleman remarked, with a longing look at the beautiful face of the girl.

"I am Camilla Carden," she replied, with a powerful effort restraining her conflicting emotions.

"The daughter of Hagar and James Carden—my child!"

And then the father sunk back in his easy-chair and covered his face with his hands, while Camilla gave way to a sudden flood of tears.

It was a trying moment for both father and daughter.

CHAPTER XXI.

A STRANGE STORY.

THE parent was the first to recover his composure.

"Be calm, my child," he said. "Try and restrain your emotions. It is a wonderful chance of Providence that has brought us together, and I sincerely thank Heaven that the opportunity is afforded me to clear myself of the dreadful charge which so long has poisoned my life."

"And you can clear yourself, father?" the girl cried rising, impulsively, and holding out her hands as though she longed to throw herself upon her father's breast.

"Yes, I can—but do not trust my word!" he claimed with a sad smile. "Listen to my story and then judge."

The girl sunk back into her chair, her breath coming thick and hard, a prey to great excitement.

"Calm yourself, my child; listen patiently, for I have a long story to tell, and as you are to be my judge you must pay strict attention."

"Yes, I will do so."

"Your appearance here, and announcement that you are the daughter of the beautiful Gypsy girl, Hagar, that I loved and lost long years ago, was a most complete surprise to me, for I had no idea that you were in the land of the living, having mourned you as one who had crossed the dark waters many years ago."

"You do not doubt the truth of my story?" Camilla said.

"Oh, no, I detected the wonderful resemblance that you bear to your mother the moment I got a good look at your face, and before you made your revelation my heart whispered that you were my child, although, as I said, I

have for years mourned for you, believing that you were no longer of earth."

"Yes, yes, I understand now!" Camilla exclaimed as her mind reverted to the past.

"After my mother's death I was placed with a farmer's family where I was ill-treated, but after a short time the Gypsies came and stole me away. You know the customs of these wanderers, my father," the girl continued. "When they come to deal with the house dwellers they prefer to work in the dark, and take great care to cover their tracks so that no one will be able to call them to an account."

"Yes, I understand," Carden replied. "I lived some time with the Gypsies, and came to know their ways almost as well as though I was 'native to the manner born.'"

"Of course I disappeared as utterly as though the earth had opened and swallowed me, and if you made any effort to find me after the dreadful tragedy occurred I do not wonder that you were not successful."

"I did, and, as you suspect, my search was a fruitless one, but I will come to that in due time."

"Now, my child, in order that you shall thoroughly understand the matter, I must tell you something of my life before I met and married your mother."

"I will listen with the greatest attention," Camilla declared.

"My right name is not Carden," the father began.

"Not Carden!" exclaimed Camilla surprised by the information.

"No, but what it is I must not reveal to you at present, for there are urgent reasons why I should not do so—really though, I do not know but what I am putting the case too strongly," he added after a moment's pause. "For although the reasons apply to the world at large yet it might be as well for me to intrust you with the secret."

"No, father, I do not ask it!" the girl exclaimed. "Keep your secret unless it is necessary for me to know it."

"Well, then, for the present I will, for it does not materially concern you. But to my tale."

"I am the younger son of a noble English family, the fourth one of four brothers, the first of which was the heir of a title, one of the proudest in England, no less than a dukedom."

"Is it possible?" the girl exclaimed in amazement.

"It is the truth I am telling you and not a romance," Carden replied.

"My father and myself never got on well together. I was not particularly inclined to be wild, but he designed me for the church, a life at which my soul revolted, for I knew that I was not at all suited for such a life."

"I would not yield obedience to his will and fled, preferring to go out into the world and seek my fortune rather than submit."

"Youth will be rash," Camilla observed.

"I was not altogether dependent upon my own exertions, for my elder brother sympathized with me, and as he had a handsome allowance, he gave me a portion of it which was ample for my support."

"That was a noble act."

"Yes, he was a princely-hearted fellow, fitted to grace the proudest title that England knows."

"While not particularly wild yet I was fond of pleasure and excelled in all manly sports, so when I went out into the world under the false name of James Carden I gave vent to my inclination, and in the course of time made the acquaintance of the Gypsies."

"Your mother's father, the Gypsy king, took a great liking to me and I received an invitation to make my home among his people. I accepted, and thus I became acquainted with your mother."

"We fell in love with each other and were soon married, a fact which I kept a secret from my relatives."

"A few months after the marriage your mother failed in health and I took her to Italy seeking a milder clime than that of gloomy England."

"The move was a successful one and in Italy your mother recovered her health, you were born, and for a few years I lived a calm and peaceful life."

"I was in a section rarely visited by English people, and never met a single one who knew me until one day I came face to face with one of my elder brothers."

"Ah, it must have been a moment of surprise for both of you," the girl remarked, listening to the story with the utmost attention.

"True, indeed, and a very disagreeable surprise it was to me," the father observed. "This brother was, like my father, a rigid martinet who believed I had committed a mortal sin in not yielding implicit obedience to my sire's wishes."

"Our interview was a stormy one, and for the first time I learned that all the particulars of my marriage to the Gypsy girl were known to my family."

"How was it possible for them to know?" Camilla asked, in wonder.

"The explanation is a simple one. After I fled, in the first outburst of his anger, my father swore that I was no longer a son of his; he would disown me, and I might die in the gutter for all he cared; but as month after month went by and no tidings of me were received, his curiosity was excited and he employed detective officers to discover what had become of me, and after a time they succeeded."

"The task was not a particularly difficult one, for beyond taking a false name I had not made any efforts to hide away. In fact, I did not expect that any one would trouble their heads about me, and so I did not take pains to act in such a way as to baffle investigation, but my leaving England threw the detectives off the track, and it was some time before they could discover where I had gone."

"My brother explained that he came when he got a clew to my whereabouts, and had prepared a letter in which he upbraided me for the folly I had committed."

"That was the letter, a part of which was found after your departure, and which seemed to suggest a motive for the crime!" Camilla exclaimed.

"Yes, it was. After parting from my brother, I returned to my cottage and told your mother all the particulars of the interview; then, when we debated in regard to what was best to be done, we came to the conclusion that it would be wise for me to secretly depart for awhile, and then your mother told me that she had noticed some ill-looking fellows prowling around in the neighborhood of the house. At first she surmised that they were Gypsies, for we were accustomed to receive calls from these wanderers whenever any of them chanced to come into our neighborhood, and they usually approached as though they were fearful that they would not be warmly greeted."

"Long years of persecution has made the Zingaros cautious to a fault," the girl observed.

"But when your mother went forth to see them they disappeared. She thought that it was very strange at the time, but when she learned of my encounter with my brother she came to the conclusion that the men were spies employed by him."

"That was natural under the circumstances," Camilla suggested.

"Yes; and so I resolved to depart for awhile in order to avoid the importunities of my brother."

"It was not my custom to keep much money in the house, and I was obliged to seek my banker who dwelt in the village."

"I waited until after nightfall before I went to his house, as I was anxious not to meet my brother again."

"The banker was absent, and I was obliged to wait until nearly ten o'clock before he returned; then I got the sum I desired, and started on my homeward journey."

The girl listened with breathless attention, for she fancied that an important revelation would soon be made.

"After leaving the town, my homeward road was a lonesome one, and for a half a mile or more it ran by the sea."

"I went steadily onward, never dreaming of danger, for the country around was peopled with quiet, honest folks, and deeds of violence seldom occurred, but when I came to a little wooded pass, by the edge of the sea, from behind some rocks came two villains who attacked me."

"The wretches!" Camilla exclaimed.

"I was so completely taken by surprise that I had no opportunity to defend myself. I was stricken down senseless almost before I comprehended that I was in danger."

"How dreadful!"

"When I recovered my senses, I found myself on board of a ship which was under way."

"The captain, with a couple of his crew, had chanced to pass along the beach, and discovering my senseless form, had me carried on board of his craft."

"He was a stranger to the neighborhood, and in a great hurry to be gone, for he had become involved in a quarrel in the town, and feared that the officers of the law might arrest and detain him, but being a humane man, he was not willing to leave me to bleed to death, yet did not dare to tarry to warn any one of my plight, so, under the circumstances, all he could do was to take me with him."

"The ship was bound for the west coast of Africa, and it was the captain's idea to transfer me to the first inward bound ship which he met, but none were encountered, and so with the vessel I sailed to southern seas."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FATHER'S SUSPICIONS.

THE girl had listened with almost breathless attention.

"This is a marvelous tale indeed!" she exclaimed.

"And it is the truth I am telling you, my girl, as surely as I am a living man!" the father asserted in the most solemn manner.

"I believe you!" Camilla exclaimed, impulsively. "Truth speaks in your words!"

"Oh, my father, how I have wronged you!" and then she cast herself upon his breast.

Tears came into the eyes of the sire as he strained his daughter to his heart; then he kissed the high, white forehead and stroked her silken hair, she kneeling at his feet and clinging to him.

"Ah, my dear child, I do not believe you can realize what a weight your words have taken from my heart," he said in a voice trembling with emotion.

"For years I have mourned you as dead, for when you disappeared so mysteriously from the house of the farmer where you had been placed, no one suspected that the Gypsies had stolen you away, so cunningly did they manage the matter, but it was supposed you had fallen into the sea and been drowned."

"Yes, it was my custom to wander down to the rocks whenever I could and spend my time there gazing out on the blue waters."

"This habit of yours was known, and so when you disappeared so mysteriously all believed that you had perished beneath the waves, although your remains were never recovered."

"But to return to my story."

"As it was not possible for me to leave the ship I had to content myself as best I might."

"The captain and crew were all good fellows and did the best they could for me, trying to make me satisfied with my hard lot, but each day I watched eagerly for a sail, hoping that some homeward-bound ship would come, but fortune frowned upon me, and my wish was not gratified."

"For a month we sailed to the southward, the winds being all in our favor, and then a violent gale arose. The craft was an old one and yielded to the fierce storm, going down one morning just as day was breaking."

"The catastrophe was so entirely unexpected that all on board were taken by surprise, and we found ourselves struggling in the water without being able to make any preparations for such an occurrence."

"What a dreadful position!" Camilla exclaimed in a tone full of sympathy.

"Yes, a situation more full of peril could hardly be imagined. I was lucky enough to clutch hold of one of the spars, and, fortunately, there was a lot of cordage attached to it so I was able to lash myself to the wood."

"When the morning light grew strong enough to enable me to see, I was horrified to discover that I was the only one who had escaped from the doomed ship, for not a soul was in sight."

"What a terrible recital!" Camilla exclaimed with a shiver.

"Yes, often now in my dreams the awful scene comes back to me and I wake from my sleep bathed in perspiration!"

"Fate indeed persecuted you!" the girl exclaimed.

"Yes, but fortune after this blow seemed to tire of striking at me, for six hours after the wreck I was rescued, and by an Italian ship, too, which had left port a week after the one on which I sailed."

"My first inquiry was for newspapers, for I was anxious to know what the world thought of my mysterious disappearance."

"You can judge of my surprise when I found that all believed I had killed my wife and fled, for the journals contained a full account of the tragedy."

"Oh, my poor father!" Camilla exclaimed.

"How you must have suffered!"

"And when I read the accounts I did not wonder that all thought that I was the murderer, for the circumstantial evidence was strong indeed."

"Even you, my child, a little prattler, testified that you heard your mother call out as if I was her assailant."

"But now that I know the truth, I can easily account for that. Being rudely roused from her slumbers, and only half awake, not conscious of what she did, she cried aloud to you," the girl said, thoughtfully.

"Yes, you have undoubtedly hit upon the truth," Carden replied.

"I meditated profoundly upon the strange web of destiny in which I had so unexpectedly found myself involved, and it did not take me long to discover that it would be an extremely hard task to prove my innocence."

"The sailors who had picked me up on the beach had all perished, or else their testimony would easily have cleared me, for they carried me on board of their vessel about an hour before the murder took place."

"The men of the ship which I was now on board of could swear to the fact that they had rescued me in mid-ocean, but that would not prove that I was not a fugitive fleeing from justice."

"True, very true!" the girl exclaimed. "You were in a snare from which there was seemingly no escape."

"So it appeared to me, and therefore I concealed my name and gave a false one."

"The ship was bound to Australia, and I determined to go there. I was without money, for the ruffians who had assaulted me had robbed me of everything of value that I possessed. I was afraid to write to England to my brothers for money, for by so doing I would expose myself to the chance of being arrested for the murder of my wife, if my real name had been discovered in the interim, and I thought the probabilities were great that it had been."

"The captain of the ship had relatives in business in the city of Melbourne, and there, as James Monteth, I began a new life."

"How strange are the decrees of fate!" Camilla exclaimed.

"One of my first acts was to arrange to have the Italian journal, which gave the news of that section of the country where I had lived, sent to me, and in that newspaper I read the account of your supposed death. Then indeed my cup of misery seemed to be full to overflowing."

"My poor father!" cried the girl with mourning eyes. "How much you must have suffered!"

"I sought forgetfulness in the cares of business. I had no wish to return to England and expected to live and die in Australia."

"Years passed on; I prospered and became the head of a great business house; then one day as I sat in my office a swarthy-faced fellow came in to see me. He said he was a Gypsy, and called me by my old name; the man tried to levy blackmail upon me, but I laughed at him, for I knew that after so long a time it would not be possible to convict me of the crime which I was accused of committing."

"I was set to thinking by this visit of the renegade, for the fact that he tried to trade upon my fears was proof that he was no true Romany or else he would never have threatened to betray to the vengeance of the householders a man who by marriage was a member of his tribe."

"That is true, for it is the custom of the sons of Egypt to settle such matters among themselves, without calling upon the law to interfere," the girl remarked.

"Your account of the visit of this man suggests to me that it is possible that he is the same rascal who called upon me in Italy and endeavored to get me to pay a certain sum of money, threatening that if I did not do so he would publish an account of my life, showing that I was born in a Gypsy's tent, and that my father was a murderer," the girl continued.

"Like you I laughed his threats to scorn and bade him do his worst!"

"He saw that I was in earnest, and, in his baffled rage, reproached me for not trying to avenge the murder of mother although I have ample means to hunt down the fugitive, and then he revealed to me that you were living in Australia under the assumed name of James Monteth."

"It is doubtless the same man, a rather undersized, thick-set fellow, so broad-shouldered as to appear almost deformed, and with peculiar, heavy eyebrows which grew so closely together as to appear like one."

"The description is exact!" Camilla exclaimed.

"And when I met my grandfather and described this man, he recognized him immediately and called the fellow by name, Kedah, but usually called Doubleback."

"As you surmised, he is a renegade, not having had anything to do with his people for years, and it was known that he had become a thorough-paced rogue."

"The visit of this man, recalling all the old memories, made me wish to see again the lands from which I had fled."

"I was wealthy, and could well afford to retire from an active business life, so, as soon as I could settle my affairs, I left Australia, went to Italy and there, unrecognized and unsuspected, conversed with all of my old neighbors who were yet alive, and from them I learned certain facts which convinced me that the assault upon my unfortunate wife was committed by men who were engaged in plundering the cottage."

"Is it possible?" the girl exclaimed.

"Yes, I am satisfied that it was so. Although I never kept much money in the house, yet my wife possessed valuable jewels, but as our neighbors were simple, common folks she never wore them so as not to excite remark."

"After the murder, when the authorities took possession of the cottage, no jewelry was found. This fact did not excite any comment, for no one knew that any valuable articles were in the house, and as the place did not present any indication that it had been ransacked for plunder, and the evidence was seemingly so strong too that I had committed the murder, no one suspected that robbers had been at work."

"Father, were not the Gypsies aware that my mother had valuable jewels?" Camilla exclaimed, abruptly.

"Oh, yes, for many of the jewels had once belonged to her mother."

"A random thought has entered my mind—there is no foundation for it, but the fact that the Gypsies knew that mother had the jewels;—I have a suspicion that this renegade Romany, Doubleback, may have had a hand in the matter."

Carden pondered on the suggestion for a few moments, and then he said:

"I believe there is something in the idea. The scoundrel put you on my track calculating that, Gypsy-like, you would be apt to take vengeance into your own hands, and he wanted me out of the way, for while I lived there was danger that I might succeed in proving that I was not the assassin of my poor wife."

"Oh, yes; there was a motive for his action."

"But it often happens in this uncertain world that these cunning, calculating villains overreach themselves, and it is certainly so in this case, for his maneuver brought us together, and now we can work in concert."

"That is true, and we must do all in our power to find the real murderer!" Camilla declared.

"I think the chances are good that the discovery can be made, for an unexpected event has occurred which may be likely to be productive of important results. Besides the jewelry which was stolen, all my private papers were taken, documents which I had carefully preserved so as to be able to prove my identity if at any time it became necessary for me to do so."

"That time has arrived. I have had no communication with my relatives since the tragedy occurred, and all the world believes I am dead."

"The brother who upbraided me in Italy settled here in the States; he died recently, leaving a large fortune, which he bequeathed to me, evidently thinking that as he had never received proof of my death I was still alive, and in this morning's newspaper was an advertisement from the lawyers in charge of the estate, calling upon me to come forward and claim my property."

"Ah, I understand you!" Camilla exclaimed. "You think it is possible that the villain who committed the murder, stole the jewelry and the papers, may come forward and endeavor to secure this prize by pretending that he is you."

"Exactly! that is my idea! If he has saved the documents, and the affair comes to his knowledge that a half-million can be gained by a successful imposture, he will undoubtedly make the effort, and then comes my chance to avenge the cruel murder of your mother!" the father declared.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED REVELATION.

It was necessary that the conspirators should have some meeting-place where they could come together and deliberate upon the best way to conduct their schemes, for they had arrived at the conclusion that it would often be advisable to hold a consultation by daylight.

Now, the Greek could not very well assume a disguise in the daytime, and, too, he did not wish to be seen going into the obscure saloon of bad reputation by any detective who knew that he was a guest of a first-class hotel, for suspicion would be apt to be excited, so the three came to the conclusion to meet in the public pleasure-ground known as Washington Square.

This Park was a little out of the way, and if the Greek, with his servant, happened to be noticed there, seated on a bench enjoying a cigar, and a noted crook was near at hand, it would be apt to be considered an accident.

It was the morning after the one on which the interview occurred between the father and daughter that Anselmo and Crooked Finger found their way to Washington Square, and in a few minutes the two were joined by the Englishman, Sly Sid.

The crook was careful not to make any sign of recognition as he came up and took a seat upon the bench.

He lit a cigar and glanced carelessly around before he said anything.

And the master and man were equally careful not to betray that the new-comer was no stranger.

A better place for a private conference could not have been selected, for there were few people in the Park, chiefly nurse-maids and children, and no one paid any attention to the party on the bench.

"Well, everything is serene, I think," the Englishman remarked.

"Oh, yes; I think we can talk freely and without any danger that anybody will trouble their heads about us," the Greek replied.

"Correct!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "I say, old boy, I think we did that little job up prime last night, to the Queen's taste, you know."

And then the speaker indulged in a chuckle, indicative of extreme satisfaction.

"It worked very well indeed," the Greek observed. "I met the lady this morning as I was coming out from breakfast, and she honored me with a polite bow; so I do not think there is a doubt about my having made a favorable impression."

"That is good!" And the Englishman rubbed his hands together gleefully. "It is so pleasant."

to have a scheme of this sort make a good beginning. But I fancy from what little I saw of the lady that she is far from being underwitted, and in order to hook the fish the bait must be managed in an extremely skillful manner."

"Yes, I agree with you there," Anselmo replied. "And the thought has come to me that it may be necessary to use a little violence, for it is just possible that I will not succeed in hoodwinking her."

"What does it matter what road we take so long as the end we desire to reach is attained?" the Englishman exclaimed, sententiously.

"Very true, you are correct about that," the Greek affirmed. "It is a little too early yet for me to decide just how the game must be worked," he added. "It is my idea, you know, that I must proceed very cautiously and I mean to study the matter carefully, and make sure of my ground before I go ahead."

"Oh, yes, you are very wise," Sly Sid exclaimed.

"Very wise!" Crooked Finger repeated, but there was little heartiness in his tone.

In fact he did not like the way this affair was going at all.

He did not dare to betray the secret he possessed, and yet he was reluctant to take any part against the daughter of the old Gypsy king for fear of being called to a bitter account for it, so his position was an extremely disagreeable one.

"Yes, I regard it as a particularly fortunate thing that we three happened to come together," the Greek declared, "as I believe it is on the cards for us to do some good strokes of business."

"I should not be surprised if our little combine turns out to be a profitable one to all concerned," Sly Sid observed.

"And speaking of strokes of business," he continued, "I ran across one this morning which would pan out magnificently, as these Americans say, if we could only work it, but there is no chance for us, unfortunately!"

And as he spoke the crook drew a newspaper from his pocket.

"It was just by the merest accident that I happened to run across this thing," he explained. "It was in yesterday's paper, but I did not see it until the morning."

And then he read aloud:

"Wanted, information of the whereabouts of James Fitzherbert, of Devonshire, England. A liberal reward will be paid for news in regard to him, if he is living, or for proofs of his death. His brother, Herbert Fitzherbert, late of New Mexico, deceased, has by will bequeathed the whole of his estate valued at half a million of dollars to the aforesaid James, and notice of this fact is thus given in this public manner so that the intelligence may reach him. Apply to Ruthven and Murdock, Temple Court, New York city."

"Well, this will be a windfall for James Fitzherbert, indeed!" the Greek exclaimed, a peculiar expression appearing on his face. "But how are you interested in the case—what do you know about it?"

"Why, bless you! I know all about it, and all about the family!" Sly Sid replied. "I was a gamekeeper on the Fitzherbert estate in Devonshire, England, thirty odd years ago!"

And then, to the amazement of his companion, Anselmo fell to studying the face of the Englishman in so earnest a way that their attention was at once excited.

"Hello, I say! what is the matter?" the crook exclaimed. "Why are you staring at me in this sort of way?"

"Well, you are the man, but you have changed so that I would never have recognized you!" Anselmo declared.

"How do you know anything about it?" the other questioned.

"Oh, I know far more of this affair than you think for, my gentle friend!" the Greek exclaimed.

"Well, hang me if I understand how it can be possible that you know anything about it!" the Englishman replied.

"Oh, I am well informed," the Greek affirmed, with an exultant laugh. "Although, as you say, it is thirty years and over since you quit the Fitzherbert estate."

"And in those days, too, my dear fellow, you were not called Sidney, nor Clutterbuck, either—that peculiar name is an adopted one."

"Well, blame me if I ain't struck all in a heap!" the Englishman declared.

"At my knowledge, eh?" and again Anselmo laughed, while the dark faced Gypsy looked on in astonishment.

"I do not wonder at it, for it is extremely odd, but there are a great many strange things in this life, you know," Anselmo added, and then he continued: "The name you wore when in the service of the Fitzherbert family, and which is truly your own, is Job Hodkins, and I do not wonder that you changed it when you got out into the world, for it doesn't sound well, being so extremely commonplace."

"Well, if this don't beat all that I ever heard of in my time!" the Englishman protested. And then he fell to studying the face of the other intently.

"Don't you remember me?" the Greek asked. "Take a good look at me—study my countenance closely, and see if you cannot recall the

circumstances which attended our meeting in years long gone."

"Well, your face certainly seems to be familiar to me, and I appear to have an indistinct idea that I did know you a good many years ago, but I must say that I cannot exactly place you," the Englishman replied, decidedly puzzled.

"Allow me to refresh your memory," Anselmo observed. "I will call back to your recollection the circumstances which led to your leaving the Fitzherbert estate, in an extremely hasty manner."

A look of surprise appeared on Sly Sid's face.

"You are astounded at the extent of my information!" the Greek exclaimed, with a smile. "And I presume you comprehend now that I am pretty well posted in regard to yourself."

"Yes, you certainly must be if you know that," the Englishman replied.

"The reason why you left the service of the Fitzherbert family was because, by an unlucky accident, your gun was discharged one day and young James Fitzherbert, then a lad of nineteen, was unfortunate enough to receive the greater part of the charge in his left shoulder; the wound was a severe one, and for a time it was believed he would lose his arm."

"That is true, and no mistake! But I don't understand how you can know anything about the matter!" Sly Sid exclaimed.

"You don't understand because you fancied that the story of how the accident occurred was known only to you and the lad, young James, for only you and he were present when the mishap occurred, and as the boy was convinced that it was an accident which could not be avoided, he magnanimously resolved to take the blame of the affair upon his own shoulders, and so he stated that it was his own gun which had done the damage."

"Well, that was the truth!" the Englishman asserted.

"Certainly, it was the discharging of his gun which produced the wound, but the weapon was in your hands when it went off, and although the youth assured you that he would take the blame of the accident upon his own shoulders—which he did—yet you felt so alarmed about the matter that you left without troubling yourself to say good by to any one."

The Englishman had been studying the face of Anselmo intently, and now exclaimed:

"I can see that your face resembles the features of some one whom I knew years ago, but it does not seem to be hardly possible that you can be—"

"James Fitzherbert!" Anselmo exclaimed. "It is the truth—I am, and for proof I can show you the scars on my left shoulder produced by the gunshot wound inflicted by the weapon in your hand!"

At this announcement the Englishman looked thoroughly amazed, while the Gypsy stared in silent wonder.

The revelation was such a complete surprise that the pair hardly knew what to make of it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LOST HEIR.

ANSELMO enjoyed a quiet laugh for a few moments, and then said:

"This is a surprise that you did not expect, eh, Sidney, old fellow?"

"That is so, but you have changed so greatly that I should never have recognized you," the other replied.

"You must take into consideration the fact that thirty years have elapsed," the Greek observed.

"You also have changed greatly; I did not remember you, and if you had not mentioned that you were a gamekeeper once on the Fitzherbert estate, the chances are great that I would never have suspected you were the man who nearly cost me the loss of an arm years ago, although I knew there was something about your face that was familiar, and I had an idea, from the time I first met you in this city, that I had encountered you somewhere in the dim past."

"Yes, I had a notion that way myself," the Englishman remarked.

"My life has been a peculiar one," the Greek affirmed in a reflective way.

"I quarreled with my father in my early manhood and went out into the world to seek my fortune. Being a younger son I was entirely dependent upon my father, and as he sought to rule me with a rod of iron I rebelled."

"Natural enough!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "You were always a high-spirited fellow!"

"When I got out into life I had a hard time of it, but as I had made up my mind that I had rather starve than go back to my father I struggled along."

"Finally England got too hot to hold me, so I went to the continent and there joined the noble band of adventurers who proudly call themselves Greeks."

"Yes, that is the modern slang name for the ingenious souls who live by their wits," Sly Sid observed. "I have had the honor of being a Greek for a good ten years now."

"In our band was a real Greek, who was

called Philip Anselmo, and there was quite a resemblance between him and myself; we were partners, working together for a couple of years, then he fell sick and died, and as I wanted a new name just about that time, I made bold to help myself to his, and so Philip Anselmo, the Greek, from Athens, I have been ever since."

"Yes, it is very convenient for a man to get rid of his old name once in a while," Sly Sid observed.

"Since I became a Greek I have borne about a dozen, and just as soon as the police become thoroughly acquainted with me under one name, I drop it and assume another—slip into a new skin, as it were."

"Yes, I understand, and so you bother the bloodhounds," Anselmo remarked.

"But to return to our mutton. This windfall is entirely unexpected, for, I had no idea that I stood any chance of ever getting any money out of my family."

"Between myself and the Devonshire property there are a dozen lives, and all of them remarkably healthy ones, so there isn't a chance for me, but this half-million I can clutch easily enough, I think, and if you choose to assist me in the enterprise I can afford to make it worth your while," the Greek declared.

"Oh, we are in it, of course!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "You can depend upon us, eh, Joseph?"

"Oh, yes! we will be glad to help you all we can."

"And knowing that there is a half-million at stake I haven't the slightest hesitation in swearing that you have changed so little since the time when I was a gamekeeper on your father's estate that I would be able to recognize you anywhere!" the Englishman declared with a sly wink.

"Your evidence will be extremely valuable," the Greek asserted.

"Yes, but you will require a deal more than my testimony to establish your claim," Sly Sid observed. "You see, I have had so much to do with law and lawyers that I am well informed in regard to legal matters."

"Oh, I understand that!" the Greek replied. "You must not imagine that I am ignorant as to the rules of the law."

"In the first place you will have to prove that you are the Job Hodkins who was once a gamekeeper at Devonshire Towers, the princely estate of the Fitzherberts."

"I can do that easily enough!" Sly Sid exclaimed. "There are three Englishmen now engaged in business here in New York who can identify me, so there will not be any difficulty in my proving that I am the Job Hodkins who was a gamekeeper at Devonshire Towers."

"That fixes your evidence all right; that is, if the witnesses don't know anything to your disadvantage," the Greek added. "For, if they were to go on the stand and swear that they knew you to be a man of bad reputation, it would certainly throw a doubt upon your statements."

"Oh, that is all right," the Englishman declared, confidently. "They haven't any idea that there is anything crooked about me."

"Are these men acquainted with me?" the Greek asked.

"No; although it is possible that they may have seen you," Sly Sid replied. "They lived in my native village, some ten miles from Devonshire Towers—were schoolmates of mine, and on different occasions came to see me after I got the position of gamekeeper, for in my village it was considered after I got the place that I had made a wonderful rise in the world."

"The chances are good then, I think, that these men may have seen me, and they will be likely to swear pretty strongly on account of your evidence that they recognize me as James Fitzherbert," Anselmo said, with a shrewd smile.

"Oh, yes, imagination is a wonderful help to the memory in all such cases, the Englishman responded.

"Another strong point in my case is that I have all my private papers," Anselmo declared. "I took care to secure them when I left home, for when I made up my mind to plunge into the stream of life under an assumed name the thought came to me it might be possible that some day I might want to assume my own appellation again, and I had better take care to have matters arranged so I would not have any trouble in proving conclusively that I was the man and not an impostor."

"Well, as things have turned out, it was certainly a lucky forethought on your part," Sly Sid observed.

"The chances are good that I will be able to prove to the satisfaction of the lawyers engaged in this case that I am the man entitled to the half-million," the Greek declared.

"Aha! what a charming prospect!" cried Sly Sid, rubbing his hands together gleefully.

"And when the money is in your hands, my dear fellow, you can afford to drop the Greeks and again become a respectable member of society, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes; a man with a fortune like that does not have to take chances," Anselmo remarked.

"And I tell you, gentlemen, I shall not be sorry

to get out of this life, for although I admire the spice of devilry which is in it, yet to understand that danger threatens constantly is not calculated to make a man rest easy at night."

"That is true," the Englishman assented. "But, by the way, how about this other little scheme which we were working—the girl business—will you give that up now?"

"Oh, no, decidedly not!" the Greek replied. "I have become interested in the lady—also much impressed, in fact. In my opinion, she is as charming a woman as I have ever encountered, and I have seen some splendid creatures in my time."

"Yes, yes, no doubt of that!" the Englishman declared. "A man like yourself, who has lived in all the great capitals of Europe, certainly ought to be a judge of womankind."

"Well, I think I am, and although I am not the kind of man likely to become fascinated by any woman, no matter how attractive she may be, yet I must confess I think I take more interest in this girl than any other I ever saw."

"Let me see!" said Sly Sid. "Had I not better hunt up these Englishmen, and refresh their memory?"

"Yes, that is a good idea."

"I will set about it at once, and report progress at about this hour to-morrow; adieu!" and then he departed, accompanied by the Gypsy, who had an errand to execute.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE JAIL-BIRD.

THE Greek smoked his cigar with a great deal of satisfaction.

"Upon my word! I think that matters are progressing splendidly!" he exclaimed, communing with himself, a habit common to deep thinkers.

"The future appears extremely rosy. There is no mistake about that!"

"Thanks to this lucky meeting with the old-time gamekeeper of Devonshire Towers, I shall come in possession of this princely inheritance. It was a most fortunate circumstance, indeed!"

"The field certainly seems clear to me, although I suppose I shall have to experience the usual legal delays, but as I am not in any hurry I can afford to wait."

"And the possession of the money will aid me to get the girl," and he nodded his head, in approval of the idea with a deal of satisfaction.

"It is odd the decided impression that this strange beauty has made upon me," he mused, after reflecting upon the matter a few moments in silence.

"Her face, too, seems so familiar to me, although I am certain I have never encountered her before."

"Yes, yes, I am quite sure of that," he murmured, after pondering over the matter for a few moments.

"Somewhere—some time—away back in the past, as near as I can get at it, I have met some woman whom this girl strangely resembles, but when, or where, is more than I can tell, and it is very strange, too, for it is but seldom I am perplexed in this way."

"I cannot remember for the life of me, and yet I have an impression that connected with the woman, whom this girl resembles, were some unpleasant circumstances, and it is so strange that I cannot remember the particulars."

As the adventurer vainly racked his brains to recall the past, his eyes were fixed upon the ground.

For fully five minutes he remained, staring at his feet, and then a man, pausing before him, intercepting the light, caused him to look up.

He saw a short, thick-set, burly fellow, with wonderfully broad shoulders, and a dark, evil-looking face.

The fellow was dressed in a coarse, dark suit of clothes, and his iron-gray hair was cropped tight to his head.

One peculiar thing about the man's face was his enormous eyebrows, which almost met, and from this overhanging thickset of bristles small restless jet-black eyes shot their fires.

The Greek looked up; his first idea was that the man was a beggar who had stopped to solicit alms, and like a true son of fortune, whose superstition declared that it was unlucky to pass a mendicant without bestowing a coin upon him, his hand sought his pocket.

Then he got a good look at the face of the stranger, and the movement was staid, while a puzzled expression appeared on his features.

"Yes, it is I—no doubt about it! I am the man!" the stranger said, as though he was able to read the thoughts passing in the mind of the other.

"Doubleback?"

"Yes, that is the name by which you knew me years ago!"

"But you have changed so greatly that at the first glance I could hardly believe that it could be you!" the Greek exclaimed.

"You are not unwilling to greet your old pal then, although he is down in the world, and you, apparently, are basking in the sunshine!" the

man questioned, with a look at the elegant attire of the adventurer.

"Oh, no, you ought to know me well enough to understand that I am not that kind of a man," the Greek responded.

"Once a pal, always a pal, no matter whether the luck be good or bad!" the Greek continued. "But it is an age since I have seen you! Sit down and tell me where you have kept yourself since we parted in Italy sixteen or eighteen years ago."

The man obeyed the injunction and seated himself upon the bench.

"Yes, you are right," he said with a sigh. "It is a good eighteen years since we met. I know, for I have kept count of the time with a deal of interest."

"Why so?"

"Because my sentence was for a year, and as month after month rolled by I kept careful count, anxiously awaiting the time when I would be liberated."

"How did you happen to get in trouble?"

"Well, it will not take me long to tell you that," the other replied.

"After I parted with you in Italy I knocked about for years and finally went to England, my native country. I had a tidy bit of swag, you remember, and I expected that it would last for awhile, but you know my weakness for liquor and gambling!"

"Yes," responded the Greek with a solemn shake of the head, "you never could resist the rattle of the dice-box or the click of the glasses."

"That is true, worse luck!" the stout fellow exclaimed with a half-groan.

"Well, it did not take me long to get rid of my cash and then, of course, I had to go to work. I fell in with a pal, a regular high-toby crackman, and we picked out a crib which looked promising, but the thing did not work right at all. The owner of the house took the alarm, and opened fire on us with his barkers, managed to put a bullet into my pal, which laid him out as stiff as a wedge, and winged me in the arm."

"That was unfortunate, truly!"

"It was as great a spill as I ever got into!" the stout fellow declared, in a tone of deep disgust.

"I gave leg-bail and was unlucky enough to run into the arms of a Bobby!"

"From one misfortune to another!"

"Yes; well, you know me of old. I am not the kind of man to hold out my wrists to have the darbies put on, if there is any chance for me to get away."

"Oh, you always play the bulldog if you can!" the Greek declared.

"In this case, I had my life-preserver handy in my pocket, and I let the policeman have a clip on the head with it, as he was trying to put the handcuffs on, which I will be bound made him see more stars than he ever saw before."

"I don't doubt that, for I know that you are an uncommon hard bitter."

"In this case, perhaps it would have been better if I hadn't put quite so much force in the blow, for it pretty near killed the Bobby and I had to run for my life."

"In fact, the hue and cry was so hot after me that I had to smuggle myself out of England in a ship, on board of which was a man who had once been a pal of mine, but had given up the life of a crook."

"For the sake of old times, though, he lent me a helping hand."

"That was a lucky thing for you."

"Yes, it looked so at the time, but as affairs turned out I might just as well staid in England and taken my gruel. The ship was bound for New York, and when I landed in this city I had so little money that I was soon forced to look out for a job, and as the easiest trick to work I tried a bit of garroting."

"Dangerous business!" the Greek declared.

"You are right! As I hadn't a pal I went in to do the job single-handed, but the first man I struck was a tough one. I took him for a gentleman, but he turned out to be a prize-fighter, and we had a red-hot tussle. At last I got in a blow with my life-preserver which laid him out, but again I used too much force, for I killed my man."

"Well, well, that was an unfortunate stroke!" Anselmo declared.

"If I could have managed to get away after the blow was struck, it would have been all right, but I was not lucky enough to make my escape. Although there wasn't a soul in sight when I made the attack, yet the policemen were on me so quick after the lick was struck that they nailed me in no time, and when I showed fight they beat me like a dog!"

"These New York policemen are not like the London Bobbies," the Greek declared.

"They use the club on the slightest provocation."

"My man was dead, and I was tried for murder. I had a good lawyer, and he took advantage of the bad character of the fellow I had settled to make out that it was an ordinary street fight, and that when I struck the fatal blow I had no intention of killing the man."

"I was a stranger, so no one was able to say anything against me, and the lawyer managed to get me off with a light sentence."

"A year, though, is a long time for a man to spend within stone walls!" Anselmo exclaimed, with a half-shiver.

"Yes, that is true enough; but you get used to it in time. I believe a man can get used to almost anything," the other replied.

"My term expired, and I was set free this morning; I came down to the city, although I had no expectation of meeting anybody that I knew, and I was astonished, I tell you, when I recognized your face!"

"Well, with me it is the old story—Europe became too hot to be comfortable, and so I crossed the water to see what I could do in Yankee land."

"How is it? is there any chance for a man to make anything?" Doubleback asked, anxiously.

"I brought a good bit of swag with me, and so I have not had to go to work yet," the Greek replied.

"You were lucky!" Doubleback exclaimed, with an admiring glance at the other. "But, then, you always were a lucky man. No matter what happens, you always manage to fall upon your feet; the worse the scrape, the easier it seems to be for you to wriggle out of it."

"That is because I work on a different principle from the one you go on," the Greek observed.

"When you work, or get into trouble, you are too much inclined to use force, and that is just where you make a serious error very often. Now I depend upon cunning to pull me through, and as a rule I am successful. You make a great mistake in yielding to this habit of using force on the slightest provocation. I can recall some pretty bad scrapes into which you got yourself, and which you might have avoided if you had been a little careful."

"You are right about that. I have made that mistake right straight along," the other admitted.

"I have had plenty of time for reflection during these long weary months I spent in the prison, and I saw just where I had made a mistake, and you can be sure that I will not be foolish enough to commit any such errors in the future."

"Hereafter, 'easy does it,' will be my motto!"

"You will be acting wisely to go on that plan, and I am sure you will get on much better."

"It is strange that you should happen to come along just at this time," Anselmo continued, after a slight pause, "for you were just in my mind."

"Thinking over old times?"

"Yes, for circumstances have occurred which recall them."

"Just cast your eyes over this advertisement," and the Greek handed the newspaper, which the Englishman had given him, to Doubleback.

"Well, well! James Fitzherbert can come in for a good thing," was the other's comment, after he had finished reading.

"Yes, and I am James Fitzherbert!"

Doubleback shook his head.

"I have all the documents to prove it!" the Greek asserted.

"Yes, I understand how that can be, but you will have trouble if you make the claim, for James Fitzherbert is alive in Australia."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WANDERER'S STORY.

THE brow of the Greek grew dark, for this was most unwelcome intelligence indeed.

"Have you not made some mistake about this matter?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" Doubleback declared, in the most positive way:

"A little over a year ago I was in Australia. I went there with a pal of mine who was a native of the country, expecting to get plenty of swag, but we did not, and there in the street one day I met James Fitzherbert. He had changed a great deal, but I recognized him immediately, and played the spy until I discovered all about him."

"And was he called James Carden as in Italy?"

"Oh, no. He had changed his name, and was now known as James Monteth."

"I suppose he feared that he would be traced and arrested for the crime which he was accused of committing in Italy," the Greek remarked, in a reflective way.

"Yes, that is likely. He had prospered since coming to Australia, and was reported to be a wealthy man. I was in hard luck at this time, and I thought I saw a chance to make something out of him."

"A little blackmail, eh?"

"Yes, that was about the idea. I called at his place of business and introduced myself as being one of the Gypsy band to which his wife belonged, then came right to the point at once, and told him that I knew he was a criminal from justice on account of having killed his wife in Italy."

"How did he take it?"

"Very coolly, indeed, and I immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had been expecting some such denouncement for years, and so was amply prepared for it."

"He showed fight?"

"Oh, yes, without the least hesitation," Doubleback replied. "He said he had serious doubts as to whether I could prove the truth of my allegations, and I was quite welcome to go ahead as soon as I liked. Then, when I told him that if he did not come up with some money I certainly would denounce him, he laughed in scorn and bade me begone."

"Of course you were not in a position to carry out your threat?"

"No, I was not. Australia was a long way from Italy, and as nearly twenty years had elapsed, it was very doubtful if he could be convicted of the crime, even if he was arrested near the place where the tragedy had occurred."

"He understood all about this, of course," the Greek remarked, "and could judge of the chances just as correctly as yourself."

"I don't like to be beaten, you know, and I racked my brains to think of some way to get at him, but at last was forced to give the matter up as a bad job."

"It is possible that in time, you know, I might have thought of some way to worry him, but things went wrong with me, and I had to leave the country."

"And that spoilt the game?"

"Yes; from Australia I went to Italy. It is a favorite dodge of mine, you understand, to get out of any country when the climate gets too warm to be comfortable, by means of a ship."

The other nodded.

"I am a pretty good sailor and can generally get a berth when I want one; a ship is a hard thing to track, you know, and a man can't be nabbed by the aid of the telegraph on the high seas as he can be by land."

"That is true, certainly."

"And now to show you that this game which you think of working is a deal sight more difficult than you take it to be, let me tell you of a little piece of business which I tried to work in Italy."

"I don't suppose that you know that I was very fond of music," the wanderer said, abruptly.

"No, I should never have suspected such a thing."

"It is a fact, and when I am in high feather, with plenty of money in my pocket, I always make it a rule to go to the opera."

"Well, I am surprised, for you are about the last man in the world I would have pointed out as being inclined to indulge in that sort of amusement."

"It is the truth, that is the kind of man I am, and you see how easy it is for even a man of fine judgment like yourself to make a mistake."

"Yes, it would not do for me to set up as a prophet."

"To resume; I was at Milan and I went to the opera one night. The principal female singer was a young girl of rare beauty with a wonderful voice, and the Italians, who are excellent critics, pronounced her to be one of the great prima donnas of the day."

"She was known as Mademoiselle Cardenia."

"Oho!" the Greek exclaimed in astonishment, "the child, eh?"

"Exactly! the child grown to womanhood, and an almost perfect image of her mother."

"A popular opera singer—and with plenty of money, I suppose?" Anselmo questioned, musingly.

"Oh, yes, she was the rage at the time, and the silver notes of these sweet singers cost gold pieces, you know."

"Such a woman as that might turn out to be dangerous if she once got started on the right track," the Greek declared, with a dark look.

"That thought came to me, and so I made bold to call upon the lady."

"It was a cunning move."

"My principal idea though was to see if I couldn't get some money out of her," Doubleback declared, with a grin.

"You were always a thrifty fellow."

"I made as big a failure in attempting to blackmail the daughter as when I tried the game on the father."

"She could not be frightened?"

"Not at all; and when I threatened that if she did not yield to my demands for gold I would publish to the world the story that she was the daughter of a murderer, instead of becoming alarmed, she grew enraged and defied me to do my worst, coupled with the threat that if I dared to make public what I knew, she would call upon her Gypsy brothers to revenge the attack."

"Aha! that was a potent threat, indeed!"

"Yes, I am a Romany, you know, but I have not had anything to do with my tribe for years. I am a sort of a renegade, I suppose; that is, the Sons of Egypt would not be apt to look upon me as a brother, although I have never taken any active part against my people."

"Very true; but you have fallen away from

them, and it is not likely that your tribe can have any particularly friendly feeling for you, although they may not be openly hostile."

"That is about the way the matter stands, and it is certain that if the girl, who is the granddaughter of the old Gypsy king, should complain to the men of the tribe that I had threatened her, I would have to flee to the uttermost corner of the earth to escape the vengeance of the Sons of Egypt."

"Yes; these Gypsy fellows have an unpleasant habit of using the knife when they seek for vengeance, and they never trouble the law to right their wrongs for them."

"I was enraged, naturally, when the girl defied me, particularly as I was aware that I did not dare to carry out my threat, so, in order to get some little satisfaction, I told her that she was no true Romany, for, although she had plenty of money, she had never attempted to punish the murderer of her mother, and then, when she expressed surprise, I revealed to her that her father was alive, living in Australia, and known as James Monteth."

"That must have been a surprise to her," the Greek exclaimed.

"Oh, it was, and she doubted me; but I told her that by using the wire to Australia she could easily find out whether there was such a man as James Monteth living there."

"That might be true enough, and yet would not be proof that he was the man you claimed him to be."

"She was shrewd enough to argue in that way also, but I made answer by telling her to put detectives on the track in Australia and see if the man did not answer to the description of her father, allowing, of course, for the lapse of years."

"And do you suppose she did it?" Anselmo asked in a thoughtful way, evidently giving the subject deep reflection.

"I have an idea she did, for the next week she quitted Milan very abruptly, and it was given out that she had been called away by important business."

"It is likely that she went to consult her Gypsy brothers in regard to the matter, for if she wished to take vengeance she would need their aid."

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"If she went to Australia she would certainly find her father without any trouble?"

"No trouble at all!"

"And now the question comes up—did she go, and if so, what was the result of the meeting?" the Greek observed in a meditative way.

"Ah, now you are putting a question which I cannot answer, for you must remember that I have been shut in prison for a year, and haven't had any opportunities to find out what has been going on in the world."

"And this James Monteth may be dead and buried, for all you know."

"That is true, I am not disputing the correctness of that assertion. The daughter may have hunted the father down and had him killed by the Gypsies, but even if the father is out of the way, the chances are a thousand to one that the daughter is alive, and she is her father's heir, you know."

"Yes, that is so."

"And she is a woman of the world, accustomed to seeing the newspapers, and when you step forward and announce that you are the missing James Carden, the heir to this half-million, you can depend upon it that the newspapers will publish a full account of the affair, for the reporters are always anxious to get hold of such news, then the daughter will read about it, and, whether her father is living or dead, she will be apt to suspect that you are not he."

"The situation hinges on one point," the Greek remarked, slowly, his brows wrinkled by the deep lines of thought.

"If the daughter found her father in Australia, and satisfied herself that he was the James Carden who fled from Italy years ago, then I could not hope to make her believe that I am her parent, but if she did not find him—there is no certainty, you know, that she did go to Australia after him—then, backed by the documents in my possession, I might be able to make her believe that I am the man I represent myself to be."

"Yes, there is a chance, no doubt," Doubleback observed, slowly.

"It will be a very difficult game to play though," he added, after thinking about the matter for a moment. "For this daughter is no foolish, simple girl, you know, but an experienced woman of the world who will not be easily deceived."

"Oh, I understand all about that. I never make the mistake of underrating the difficulties in the way. I have examined the ground carefully, and feel sure that I can make out a strong case. You must remember that the stake is a great one, and a man must be dull indeed not to play a good game for a half-million!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

MAKING AN ADVANCE.

"Yes, yes, you are right about that. It is an enormous sum of money and is worth a desperate effort," Doubleback observed, with a wise shake of his massive head.

"I have calculated very closely and thought I could cover every point, but your information was a surprise to me, for I had no idea that either the father or daughter was alive."

"Well, they are, or at least they were a year ago, and as they were strong and hearty—in the best of health when I saw them—it is far more probable that they are alive and well at this moment than that anything has happened to them."

"Yes, that appears to me to be sound reasoning," the Greek replied, reflectively.

"One point, though, is in my favor as far as the father and daughter are concerned, and that is the distance they are from the scene of battle," he continued.

"The contest will take place here in New York, while the father is in Australia and the girl in Italy. It is my belief, too, that the chances are great that no knowledge of the matter will be apt to reach either of them. The lawyers will, or have, doubtless, advertised in England and America, but they are not likely to trouble the Italian or Australian newspapers, so, unless an account of this affair is published as news, neither one will be likely to learn anything about it."

"Well, you certainly seem to have figured out the matter correctly, but there is a point which you have neglected to take into consideration," the other remarked.

"What is it?"

"This daughter is an opera-singer—a bird of passage, likely to travel from one country to another at a moment's notice. One month she may be in Italy, the next in England, and the following one in America."

"That is true," the Greek responded, his brow again darkened by the deep lines of thought.

"She calls herself Mademoiselle Cardenia?"

"Yes, that is her stage name."

"Well, I do not remember to have ever heard the name before, and if she was in this country, and prominently before the public, I think I would be apt to have read something about her in the newspapers, for I always keep myself posted as to what is going on, although I never take much interest in the amusement notices."

"Oh, she may not be here now, but the point is that you must expect her to appear at any time."

"Ah, yes, of course," Anselmo replied.

"Well, as far as the daughter goes, I do not think I would be much troubled by her appearance, provided that she has not been to Australia and placed herself in communication with this James Monteth."

"You see, friend Kedah, I am playing an extremely strong game, and as it happens I am well prepared for a contest of this kind, for I lately formed a little band of good men in anticipation of working some profitable schemes."

"You are in good trim, then."

"Yes, and fortune has stood my friend, for one of the men of my band was formerly a gamekeeper on the Fitzherbert estate," and then he related the particulars in regard to the Englishman.

"A gunshot wound in the shoulder, eh?" Doubleback said, musingly.

"Yes, and I can show the scars of such a wound."

"Yes, I know that. I remember all about the circumstance, and at the time you were angry enough about the accident, thinking it was a great misfortune."

"That is true, for I feared it would cost me my arm."

"You had little idea that the day would come when you could turn the circumstance to such advantage."

"No, for I am no prophet to look into the future. I fancied at the time that it was a cursed unlucky accident, but now it looks as if it was a most fortunate thing, indeed."

"Yes, for it certainly seems as if you had a mighty good chance to clutch this enormous fortune."

"So it looks to me; the game appears to be in my hands, and there is little doubt I will win if the man from Australia, and the girl from Italy, do not make their appearance."

"And even if they do, it would not be such a difficult matter to put them out of the way!" Doubleback exclaimed, with a dark and savage look.

"That is true, and you are just the man to do a job of that kind."

"You are right—I am."

"It was a lucky chance for both of us that we happened to meet," the Greek observed. "You can be useful to me, and if I am fortunate enough to win I will put a lot of money in your pocket."

"I need it badly, and no mistake!" Doubleback exclaimed.

"I think I will pay these lawyers a visit, so as to ascertain how the land lies, and as I know you to be a pretty shrewd fellow, and able to see as far into a millstone as anybody, I think it will be best for you to accompany me."

"All right; I am ready to go."

"We will have to stop at a clothing-shop on our way and have you fitted out," the Greek remarked, with a contemptuous glance at the coarse clothes of the other.

"This is a remembrance of my stone boarding-house up the river," the other explained, with a grin.

"A new suit will make another man out of you, and then you can appear as a friend of my boyhood, who formerly resided in Devonshire, and whom I chanced to meet in this city. I can post you, you know, so that you will make a valuable witness to testify in regard to my identity."

"Oh, yes, and as I am well acquainted with the country in the neighborhood of Devonshire Towers, I can easily pass for a native of the region, although I first saw the light far to the north of England."

"Come on! we will make an advance at once, so as to be able to see just how difficult this task is going to be."

"Of course I have no idea how long this advertisement has been running in the paper. It may have been in for a month, as far as I know. I rarely look at the personal advertisements, and so I don't know anything about it, and it was just by accident that Sly Sid happened to see the paper. So, after I get you toggled out, the first move is to be to the newspaper office to examine a file in order to ascertain the truth about this matter."

Doubleback said the idea was a good one, and the two started.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN INTERVIEW AND A SURPRISE.

THE pair proceeded to Broadway and at the first clothing store that they came to a handsome dark suit was purchased which when Doubleback was attired in it made a wonderful difference in his appearance.

Then the two took a car and rode down-town to the newspaper office.

When the file was consulted the discovery was made that it was the thirtieth issue of the advertisement that the Englishman had seen.

"How strange that the advertisement should have been in for a month before either Hodgkins or myself happened to see it," the Greek remarked to his companion as they left the newspaper office and proceeded toward the building where the lawyers who had charge of the affair had their offices.

"Yes, but I think it will be rather to your advantage than otherwise," Doubleback replied.

"I understand what you mean. You think that as the advertisement has been running for thirty days that there has been ample time for the daughter to make her appearance, even if she had to cross the ocean!"

"Yes, or even if she has not come, she could have notified the lawyers by letters in regard to her claims."

"You are right, and as so much time has elapsed I ought to be able to ascertain just about how matters stand."

"I shall proceed very cautiously," the Greek continued after a moment's pause.

"It would be wisest."

"It will not be my game to announce just what my claims are until I ascertain whether anybody else has come forward or not."

"Yes, you don't want to run your head into any trap!"

"You can trust me for being careful in regard to that!" Anselmo declared.

A few minutes later the pair were in the lawyer's office.

They found a tall, raw-boned Scotchman, busy at a desk; a man with a face as hard as though cut out of a pine knot, about fifty years old, and with so much bristly gray hair about his face as to strongly suggest a terrier dog.

"I came in reference to the advertisement in regard to James Fitzherbert," the Greek explained.

"Ah, yes, glad to see you, sir; pray be seated, gentlemen," the lawyer said, and as the pair took chairs, he continued, "I am Mr. Ruthven, and have charge of that business."

"I think I can give you some information in regard to this missing gentleman, if you are not already in communication with him."

"No, sir; so far the advertisement has not been productive of any results."

"I have had a dozen or two men to see me about the matter, but none of them could give any information of the least value; some of the men came with the best intentions in the world, thinking that some acquaintance or friend was the party wanted, but in all the cases when I came to question in regard to certain facts I found that the men were not able to give me any information."

"A few fellows were frauds out and out, who thought they could, by hook or crook, make some money out of the affair without knowing anything about the matter. Of course I sent them to the right-about in short order!" the legal gentleman declared in conclusion.

"The advertisement was first brought to my attention to-day, or else I would have called upon you before," the Greek explained.

The lawyer nodded.

"It is my impression that I can give you the information you desire," Anselmo continued.

"I am very happy to hear it, for so long a time has elapsed since the advertisement was put in the newspapers without its being productive of any results that I began to think the chances were great that neither James Fitzherbert nor his heirs were in the land of the living."

"The advertisement, you understand, was put in the principal English and French journals at the same time it was inserted in the American ones," the lawyer added.

"Well, it is rather odd that I did not see it until this morning, but such is the fact," Anselmo observed.

"My dear sir, just such odd things are happening every day."

"I came as soon as I saw it, and I am certain I can give you the information you desire."

"Very much delighted, my dear sir, I shall be if you can!" the lawyer declared. And as he spoke he pulled open a drawer and took out a sheet of paper, closely filled with writing, upon which he cast his eyes.

"You wish information of James George Arlington Fitzherbert," the Greek began.

A look of surprise appeared in the keen eyes of the lawyer, although not a muscle of his stolid face changed.

The stranger had given him the full name of the missing heir without being asked.

"Yes, that is correct. That is the name," he assented.

"Fourth son of Herbert Fitzherbert of Devonshire Towers, Duke of Dorset."

"Correct again!" and a faint smile appeared on the face of the grim old lawyer, for he imagined he had at last found a man who did know something about the matter.

"My dear sir, I am pleased to see that you are well informed about this affair. None of the rest who came were able to tell the middle names of the missing heir, although there were plenty who knew all the particulars in regard to the family."

"Well, that does not really prove, you know, that I can tell you much about the man who has been missing for over twenty years, for any one who lived in the neighborhood of the family estates could tell you these particulars."

"Over twenty years, eh?" and the lawyer consulted the memorandum. "Yes, that is correct, too."

"By the way, you have not favored me with your name yet," and the lawyer fixed his keen gray eyes upon the Greek.

"Will you excuse me from going into that just at present?" Anselmo replied, very politely. "It does not really matter, you know, and I have a good reason for not wishing to make it public just at present."

"Oh, certainly, of course; suit yourself about that; as you justly observe, it is not of any particular importance."

And, as he spoke, the legal gentleman made a careful scrutiny of the Greek's face, and then, with wrinkled brows, consulted the memorandum, wherein a full description of the missing heir was set down.

"About twenty-five years ago, James Fitzherbert quarreled with his father and fled from the ancestral towers to seek his fortune out in the world."

"Exactly so!"

"He took the name of James Carden."

A faint grin appeared on the stern face of Ruthven as he nodded assent.

"And as James Carden, unknown to all of his family, he married a Gypsy girl."

"Correct, my dear sir, quite correct! It is evident that you are well informed."

"When he married the girl, he took up his quarters with the Gypsies and lived in their tents."

Again the lawyer nodded, his eyes fixed on the written page.

"A few months after the marriage, his wife's health failed, and the pair went to Italy; there they remained for about five years, and in Italy a child—a daughter—was born to the couple."

"And the name of the child?"

"Camilla!"

And, as he answered the question, the thought came to him for the first time that the name of the missing heir's child was the same as that of the charming young lady at the hotel whom he had fixed upon for a victim.

It struck him, too, that it was an odd coincidence.

"Camilla is correct; that was the name of the child," the lawyer remarked. "And now, my dear sir, will you excuse me if I jump ahead a little and ask you if James Fitzherbert is alive?"

"Your curiosity is natural under the circumstances, and I have no objection to answering the question," Anselmo replied.

"James George Arlington Fitzherbert is alive, for I am he."

The lawyer nodded in a satisfied way.

"I cannot say that I am very much surprised," he remarked. "For when you answered the questions so promptly, and in such a satisfactory manner, I had a suspicion that you

were the party in person; and then, too, you certainly answer to the description given here"—and he tapped the paper with his finger—"allowing for the changes that years would make."

"I have changed greatly I am aware, and it would be marvelous indeed if I answered to any description that my brother could give, for I have not seen him for twenty years," the Greek observed, slowly, and as he spoke a melancholy look appeared on his face.

"Yes, twenty years," the lawyer repeated, consulting the memorandum.

"And our last meeting took place in Italy."

"Yes, it is so set down here."

"It was not a pleasant interview for either one of us," the Greek explained. "He upbraided me for disgracing the noble name I bore by contracting a marriage with a low-born Gypsy girl, and urged me to desert my wife and return with him to England, where a brilliant future awaited me, if I would only use the gifts which a bounteous nature had bestowed upon my unworthy self, but I rejected the proposition and we parted in anger."

"Correct, my dear sir, quite correct."

"A few hours after I parted with my brother, by a sudden calamity I was bereft of both wife and child," Anselmo continued.

"The blow produced such an effect upon me that I fled from the scene of my affliction in a state near to madness; a wild desire came upon me to go where I would not see a familiar face, nor hear a tongue which I could understand, and so I went to Russia."

"Ah, yes, you would not be likely to be troubled by any acquaintances there."

"In time my sorrow lessened, yet the wound still rankled, and the thought of ever returning to England—of ever again looking upon the scenes of my childhood, was particularly repugnant to me."

"Yes, yes, I have heard of just such cases," the old lawyer remarked.

"Man is certainly a strange animal, and apt on certain occasions to do the most extraordinary things."

"I wished to blot out the gloomy past—desired to forget that I was an Englishman, or had ever trodden on English soil, and so I took a false name and became a renegade."

"I must say, my dear sir, that your story is one of the strangest that has ever come to my knowledge!" the legal gentleman exclaimed.

"Yes, it is not often that a man passes through the experience which I have undergone," the claimant asserted.

"Chance, after a year or so, led my wandering footsteps to Greece, and in the city of Athens I made a lengthy stay, and became so attached to the place and its people that I resolved to henceforth call myself a Greek."

"I had good friends at court, and through their aid received the royal permission to become a subject of the ancient land, and from that time to this I have been known as Philip Anselmo."

"Yes, yes, I see," said the lawyer, following the recital with great interest.

"In Greece I prospered, but the roving spirit was still strong within me, and about a year ago I set out on a tour around the world," the Greek explained.

"It was my purpose to take plenty of time to make the trip, and stop for weeks or months, as the case might be, in any country which seemed likely to prove interesting to me."

"Ah yes; I understand."

"And of all the countries I have ever visited this land has made the deepest impression upon me," the Greek remarked. "In fact, I am so well pleased with it that I have seriously thought of taking up my residence here."

"It is a fine country," the lawyer responded. "I have lived here for over thirty years, and though I visit the land of my birth once in a while, yet I do not think I would ever be contented to remain there."

"Now, in regard to this matter, I have certain proofs to offer which I think will amply satisfy you that I am the man I profess to be."

"My dear sir, I must admit that so far you have shown a knowledge of the subject which could only be possessed by James George Fitzherbert, or by some one who had been in his confidence."

"Although the lapse of years has changed me greatly, so that in many particulars I do not doubt I differ greatly from the description given by my brother, yet I bear scars, the result of a gunshot wound, which will remain with me to my dying day."

"Yes, that is correct," the lawyer assented, with a glance at the memorandum.

Then the Greek proceeded to relate the story of the accident which had occurred to him in early years, and at the conclusion of the tale exhibited the scars.

"I was careful, also, to preserve my private papers, for the thought came to me that the time might come when it would be necessary for me to prove to the world that I am James Fitzherbert," he said, in conclusion.

"Well, my dear sir, I do not think you will have much trouble in making that manifest," the lawyer declared.

"It is possible, too, you know, that some of the parties who were acquainted with you in England may come forward, and their evidence would help your case."

"Oh, yes; that is very likely," the Greek replied. "And as for my papers, I will take great pleasure in submitting them to you at any time."

"To-morrow, say?"

"Yes, to-morrow will suit me," Anselmo replied.

And then the Greek withdrew, proceeding up-town to the hotel.

Doubleback was on the lookout for his return, and met Anselmo as he alighted from the car.

"What luck?" he questioned.

"Could not wish for better," was the Greek's exultant reply. "I do not think there is a doubt in regard to my success."

"The prize is a rich one, and if you gain it so easily it will be like picking up money."

"Well, as far as I can see, there is not a single obstacle in the way."

The two had gained the entrance to the hotel, and halted there to allow a group of people to pass.

"Thunder and lightning!" cried the Gypsy, abruptly, and yet in so cautious a tone that it only reached Anselmo's ears.

"What is it?"

"The girl—James Carden's daughter—has just passed!" was Doubleback's startling announcement.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CALCULATING THE CHANCES.

THE Greek was amazed and stared in the direction that Doubleback was gazing.

"Are you sure?" he inquired.

"Yes, as sure as that I am standing here at this moment!" was the confident response.

"She just came out of the hotel and went down the street. There she is on the corner, waiting for a car to take her up-town I judge from the way she is looking down the street."

"The girl in black?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure that you have not made a mistake?"

"Did I not tell you before that I was sure?" Doubleback exclaimed.

"There, see! she has motioned to a car to stop!" the Gypsy added.

"Yes; let us get inside. It is important that she should not see us together!" the Greek declared, leading the way into the hotel.

An expression of surprise appeared on the face of Doubleback as he followed his companion.

From the inner vestibule of the hotel the pair could command a view of the street without danger of being observed.

The lady in black got into the car, and as the vehicle passed, the two had a good view of her.

"Oh, yes, that is the girl beyond a doubt!" Doubleback asserted. "I did not think I could be mistaken. It is Camilla Selden!"

"Camilla Selden she calls herself now," the Greek observed. "And she is the woman whom I told you of—the one I had marked out for a victim."

"Is it possible?" the other exclaimed in astonishment.

"Oh, yes, and that is why I did not want her to see us together, for if she did the chances are great that her suspicions would be excited, and she would be apt to come to the conclusion that I was not what I appeared to be."

"Yes, that would be likely, for she is shrewd enough, a woman of the world, you know, who has had plenty of experience and is not likely to be easily fooled."

A grave expression appeared on the face of the Greek, and he shook his head in a manner which indicated that he was greatly perplexed.

Doubleback was quick to notice the change and he said:

"This discovery is rather an unwelcome one to you I fancy?"

"Yes, it certainly is, for it shows me that I have made a great mistake in my estimate of the girl."

"That is unfortunate, and it is rather odd too that so able a man as yourself should make such a blunder."

"Oh, we sharp fellows get awfully tripped up once in a while," the Greek admitted.

"The girl is so quiet and unpretending in her ways that I thought I would be able to easily hoodwink her, but now I know who she is I understand that the job would be an extremely difficult one."

"Oh, yes, you can depend upon that!" Doubleback exclaimed. "The man who succeeds in duping her must be a marvel of acuteness. I tried to get some money out of her in Italy and was quickly dismissed with a warning that if I was not careful she would set the Gypsies after me."

"That threat might be worth heeding in Europe where there are many bands of Romanys but in this country it would not amount to much," the Greek declared with a sneer.

"Yes, that is true, and long as are the arms

of the sons of Egypt they would not be apt to reach a man on this side of the ocean."

"This discovery of who the girl really is changes the situation materially," Anselmo declared in a thoughtful way.

"I should say it did!" Doubleback exclaimed with a grave shake of the head.

"She is Carden's daughter and his heir of course."

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"And it is safe to assume that the fact of her father being extensively advertised for will come to her knowledge sooner or later, that is if she knows that James Carden was really James George Fitzherbert."

"Ah, yes, but it seems to me that the chances are about a thousand to one that she is not aware of that fact!" the other declared.

"I was a member of the Gypsy band at the time that the marriage between the young stranger and the Romany girl took place, and I know that the old Gypsy king had no suspicion that Carden was sailing under false colors, and it was not until we made the discovery in Italy that I had an inkling of the truth; I knew as much about the man, too, as anybody."

"I think you are right, and it will be safe to assume that the girl does not know her father's secret, and so will not be apt to come forward to dispute my claim that I am the missing man."

"That is the way it looks to me," the other remarked.

"The sudden appearance of this girl is a complete surprise to me. I had no idea she was living. I never gave the matter much thought, but it was my belief that she had died long ago, and now her unexpected coming suggests a question to me: is it certain that the man who was known as James Carden, who disappeared so mysteriously after the death of his wife, whom he was suspected of murdering, is really dead?"

Doubleback pondered over the question for a few moments before he replied; a dark look came over his face; he cast a cautious glance around in order to assure himself that no one was near enough to overhear his words, and then he said, speaking in a low tone:

"I don't think there is much doubt about the matter, and I will tell you why I think so."

"When I met you in Italy and you suggested I should join you in a little scheme which you had planned, I hesitated for awhile, for at the time I was working with a couple of pals, and on the very night that you wanted me to go in with you I had arranged to join them in a little venture, but when I came to reflect upon the matter, I came to the conclusion that it would pay me better to go in with you, so I did."

"The game that my pals had planned was an attack on this James Carden. They had discovered that he was to call upon a banker in the town that evening, and they surmised that when he proceeded to his home he would have considerable money upon his person."

"The road which he was obliged to take was a lonely one, and for a good part of the way ran along the sea."

"My pals laid in wait for Carden and managed to knock him in the head without any trouble; as they had expected, the booty was a good one, and after they got it they lost no time in getting out of the neighborhood, for it was their impression that the man was fatally injured."

"How did you learn these particulars?"

"Oh, I ran across the pair a year or so after the affair occurred, and they told me all about it, anxious to show me, you know, what I had missed by not going in with them."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"They had not lost any time in getting out of the country after the robbery, and by a little skillful questioning I soon ascertained that they hadn't any idea of what occurred after they fled."

"I imagine that your pals were not men who cared to read newspapers," the Greek remarked.

"No, literature was not in their line, and they were astonished when I told them that the man whom they assaulted had never been seen after that night; then I hinted pretty broadly that I thought they had not told the true story of the attack, but they protested that they had."

"You did not kill the man and bury him then?" I said. "Oh, no!" both exclaimed, and I could plainly see that they were telling the truth. Then they fell to speculating as to what had become of the man, and finally came to the conclusion that as he had fallen on the beach the tide had risen and carried the body away."

"Well, it seems to me that the explanation is a reasonable one," Anselmo observed in a thoughtful way.

"Yes, only it is rather strange that the body was not discovered."

"It might have been found by some of the fishermen, and as Carden wore a good suit of clothes the men would have been very apt to strip the body and hide it away in order to cover up their theft."

"Very likely!" the Greek decided. "The Italian fishermen are an ignorant, unscrupulous lot of fellows, and I don't doubt that the most of them are firm believers in the old adage that all is fish that comes to their nets."

"I think the chances are great that Carden perished on that night; so there is not much danger that he will come forward to dispute your claim that you are James Fitzherbert."

"Yes, it strikes me that you are right about that. There is danger though to be apprehended from the girl if she knows the truth in regard to her family and against that peril we must provide."

"Yes, it would be wise to look out for equals."

"Still, when you come to examine the matter carefully, it appears to me that it will be an extremely difficult matter for the girl to prove that I am not her father," the Greek declared, thoughtfully. "It is not possible that she can know any more about her father than is known to the world at large. He disappeared when she was a child and thus she cannot retain a distinct recollection of him."

"Oh, no, and if she did the years that have elapsed since then would have wrought such an alteration that her early memories would not be of much use to her."

"It has always been my rule to play as safe a game as possible," the Greek observed. "And in this affair I want to arrange it so that the girl will be powerless to interfere in my plans, which she would be apt to try to do if she knows the truth about her parentage."

"Yes, it would be wise to take all possible precautions."

"I marked the girl for a victim before I knew who she was; I thought her one of those rich, eccentric English girls and my game was to marry her, get hold of the cash and then get out."

"Yes, I understand."

"I arranged it so as to make her acquaintance in a romantic way, hoping to be able to fascinate her, but now that I find she is an old-stager I shall have to play a different game."

"It will not be an easy matter to deceive her, I can tell you!" Doubleback exclaimed. "She may appear to be innocent but she is awful deep."

"We will have to try the old dodge of getting her into such a position that she will be obliged to marry me whether she wants to or not; then I will have a claim on this big amount of money even if I fail to get it as the missing heir."

"The idea is a good one."

"I think so," the Greek replied. "Come up to the room and we will work it out."

And then the two departed.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SCOTCHMAN IS ASTONISHED.

THE old lawyer was very favorably impressed by his visitor, and after the Greek departed he rubbed his hands softly together and exclaimed:

"A very superior man indeed! Any one could see with half an eye that he is a man of birth and education; altogether different from all the rest who have been to see me in regard to the advertisement."

"I had really about come to the conclusion that the heir was dead, but there isn't any doubt that this party was the right one, and I am glad that the affair will be settled."

At this point a lady and gentleman made their appearance.

It was the father and daughter, Monteth, as we shall continue to call him and Camilla.

Monteth proceeded to business at once.

"I came to see you in regard to the personal advertisement issued by your firm for information of James Fitzherbert," he said.

"Egad! it fairly rains information this morning," the old lawyer muttered to himself, and then he requested the pair to be seated.

"You seek for proof of the existence or death of James George Arlington Fitzherbert, fourth son of Herbert Fitzherbert, of Devonshire Towers, Duke of Dorset, who mysteriously disappeared in Italy about twenty years ago."

"Yes, sir, your statement is correct," the lawyer remarked, considerably astonished that a second party should so soon appear able to give the particulars in regard to the long missing heir.

"I think I am acquainted with the man who is wanted, but before I proceed further may I ask if you have heard from the party?—I presume there isn't any reason why you should not be willing to give me the information, and therefore I am not presumptuous in asking the question."

Scotchmen as a race are noted for their caution and shrewdness, and the old lawyer was as close-mouthed a man as ever came from the "land o' cakes," and so it was only natural that he should meditate for a moment or two before he answered the question.

He debated the matter in his mind, but as far as he could see there wasn't any reason why he should not give the desired information.

This stranger might be one of the witnesses, of whom the gentleman spoke, who would be able to give valuable testimony in regard to his identity.

"Well, as far as I can see there isn't any objection to my answering the question," the lawyer remarked.

"A gentleman who claims to be James Fitzherbert called upon me this morning."

"You, of course, have no interest in this matter except to get at the truth," Monteth said, abruptly. "You wish to find the right man, and will use all possible care to prevent any impostor from deceiving you."

This speech surprised the old gentleman, and he was shrewd enough to see the speaker had an idea that the man who had claimed to be the heir was not the right one.

"You are correct, sir, in your assumption that I am desirous that exact justice shall be done in this case, and I assure you, my dear sir, that I shall submit the man who claims to be the missing heir to a most searching examination before I will admit he is the proper person."

"Apart from my duties as a lawyer in this case there is a personal feeling which will make me unusually careful and cautious about the matter," the old lawyer added.

"The man who placed this affair in my hands was my personal friend, and has been so for years. We were at college together and the friendship which there began was ended only by the grim interference of the stern tyrant, Death, and therefore you can be satisfied that any man who claims to be the long-absent heir will have to make out so strong a case that the greatest doubter will not be able to find a weak point in it."

"Your position is just as I imagined it would be," Monteth observed.

"There are reasons—strong ones, too, why I should take the deepest interest in this affair," he continued.

"Like you I enjoyed the friendship of the man who has now gone to his long home, and I do not intend to allow the heritage which he left to be claimed by any impostor."

"I judge from the way in which you speak that you have an idea that this party who called upon me to-day is not the right man," the old lawyer remarked with a searching glance at the other.

"I know that he is not," Monteth replied in a tone of calm conviction which surprised the Scotchman.

"My dear sir, are you aware that you are making a pretty strong statement?" the legal gentleman inquired.

"Oh, yes."

"Possibly, though, you are acquainted with the party?"

"No, I have no knowledge whatever in regard to him personally."

"Then I do not understand how you can be so positive about the matter."

"Simply because I am certain that the real heir has not called upon you to put in his claim, and so if any man has presented himself to you saying that he is James Fitzherbert, it is certain that he is an impostor!"

The firmness with which this assertion was made amazed the lawyer.

If the man was not sure of his ground his decided stand was astounding.

"Of course, my dear sir, you are aware that a weighty matter of this kind cannot be settled by mere assertions; there must be proof."

"Oh, yes, I am conscious of that fact, and I trust before I come to the end of this interview I will be able to show you that this man is not James Fitzherbert—perhaps I am putting that a little too strongly though," he hastened to add.

"Possibly the best I will be able to do will be to throw a doubt upon his statements," Monteth continued.

"This is one of those complex and difficult cases which cannot be settled off-hand, of course," the lawyer remarked.

"I am aware of that fact, and am too familiar with this affair not to understand how hard it will be for the true heir to make good his claim; still, I possess one advantage, I think, in pleading the cause I have undertaken to advocate, and that is, I understand the game which the false heir will play, and then too there is another fact which will aid me, and that is the impostor is not aware that James Fitzherbert is living, for he believes it is the shoes of a dead man that he is desirous of putting on."

"I do not think I am betraying any confidence when I say to you that this gentleman who claims to be James Fitzherbert has made out an extremely complete case, and if he is not the right man it is extraordinary how he managed to become acquainted with all the particulars which he made known to me."

"I can explain that easily enough, and the position which you must now take in this matter is that of a judge; you must weigh the statement which I am about to make with that of this claimant and decide which of the two is most worthy of belief."

"My dear sir, I assure you that I will do the best I can to hold the scales of justice with an even hand!" the old lawyer declared.

"I have no doubts whatever on that score," Monteth asserted.

"Now I will begin by stating the game which I think this false claimant will play."

"In the first place, he is thoroughly acquainted with many important particulars concerning the early life of James Fitzherbert. He knows that the young man left England and hid himself under a false name in Italy. He is aware,

too, that in Italy a tragedy occurred, the result of which was, seemingly, the disappearance of young Fitzherbert."

"The tragedy was the murder of Fitzherbert's wife—he was then known as James Carden, and circumstances were such that all believed the young husband had killed his wife and then taken refuge in flight."

"But the truth of the matter was, the wife was killed by ruffians, bent on plunder, which they succeeded in obtaining, and among the booty were all the private papers of James Fitzherbert; the possession of these documents has enabled this man, the robber, to present himself in the guise of the victim whom he plundered."

"Upon my word, sir, this is one of the strangest stories that I ever heard!" the Scotchman declared.

"Yes, it is a marvelous tale, but none the less a true one!" Monteth replied.

"Now, pray listen patiently while I tell the story," he added.

"You may be certain that I will do so, for I am deeply interested in this matter," the old lawyer declared.

And then Monteth related the tale of the life of James Fitzherbert, with which our readers are already familiar.

The Scotchman listened with the utmost attention, his keen gray eyes fixed intently upon the face of the speaker, as though he would read his very soul.

"Well, sir, upon my word I must declare that this story is really marvelous!" the lawyer exclaimed, when Monteth ended his recital.

"I had a suspicion, of course, when you began, that you were an interested party, and I must admit that you have made out a good case. So this young lady is your daughter?"

"Yes, the child that I mourned for years as being dead," Monteth replied.

"The other party believes that she is dead, too, for he told me so."

"Yes; it was only by a lucky accident that we were brought together, and it is not a wonder that this cunning schemer is not aware of her existence."

"Well, my dear sir, I will frankly admit to you that this man told his story in such a plausible way that I felt almost certain he was the right one, but it is an old saying that one story is good until another one is told, and I do not think I ever knew an instance where the adage fitted better," the old lawyer declared.

"The prize is a big one, and it is not strange that an able and unscrupulous schemer should strain every nerve to win."

"And the man seems to be so certain of his game, too," the lawyer remarked, in a puzzled way.

"He spoke about advertising for witnesses who could identify him, servants of the family and men who dwelt in the neighborhood, and mentioned one man in particular who would be an important witness indeed if he could be secured, a person who used to be a gamekeeper on the Fitzherbert estate."

"Job Hodkins?" Monteth exclaimed, immediately.

"Yes, that was the name."

"A thorough-paced rascal, who nearly killed me once by the accidental discharge of his gun—that is, it appeared like an accident, but I always believed there was malice at the bottom of the affair; still, as it was one of the cases where a man doesn't like to be hard upon an inferior, his version of the affair was accepted without question."

"Have you any idea whether Hodkins is alive or not?"

"No; after the accident he quitted the service of my father and went to London; a year or so after I heard that he had fallen into bad company, and the report came that he was in jail, a result which did not surprise those who knew him, for his reputation had never been good, although while acting as gamekeeper he had been careful to behave himself."

"Did this accident of which you speak leave any marks?"

"Yes; my right shoulder is scarred to this day."

"And now comes a most singular fact," the Scotchman remarked. "This man bears the scars of such a wound on his person and exhibited them to me as proof that he was James Fitzherbert; your brother mentions these scars as means by which you could be identified."

"All the particulars in regard to this matter were set down in a memorandum drawn out by me when I sought refuge in Italy under a false name, for I feared that some accident might happen to me, and I wished to leave proof behind me if I were suddenly taken away, so that my wife and child could make good their claim to any property which might come to me."

"It was my idea, you see, that in time my father might repent of his harshness and do me tardy justice."

"I was wrong in this assumption as far as my father was concerned, for he never forgave me for acting in disobedience to his orders."

"Yes, yes, I see," the old lawyer observed thoughtfully. "This paper is in your handwriting of course?"

"Yes, but if you think you can catch this man

by comparing his hand with that of mine you have made a mistake, I think," Monteth observed.

"That was my idea."

"He will not be apt to make the blunder of presenting any papers supposed to be written by me in a different hand from the one he writes. It will be an easy matter for him to copy the documents."

"Very true, I did not think of that," the old lawyer admitted.

"The fact of the matter is that I have very little knowledge of criminal matters. All my experience is with commercial matters, and I was never inside a police-court even as a visitor; so I am as green about any rascality of this kind as a school-boy."

"I cannot boast of much knowledge in that line," Monteth observed. "But in this case I am spurred on to the struggle by the knowledge that I am engaged in a contest with a man who is a bloody-handed, remorseless villain—one of the murderers of my wife, a scoundrel who ought to have been hung twenty years ago!"

"My dear sir, the more I reflect upon this matter the greater becomes my conviction that I have had a most narrow escape from being duped by as crafty a rascal as I ever heard of in all my experience!" the Scotchman declared.

"As I said before the prize is a great one, and from the little which you have been able to tell me about the matter I am satisfied that this man who is engineering the scheme is a most consummate scoundrel, and it is very probable indeed, to my thinking, that there is a league of rascals engaged in the affair."

"I should not be surprised if your assumption is correct," the Scotchman observed after thinking over the matter for a moment.

"As I before remarked I am not well posted in regard to these law-breakers, but it is my impression that they usually hunt their game in groups, and I hardly think that even a most experienced rascal would undertake to carry on such a scheme as this single-handed."

"Oh, there is undoubtedly a number of scoundrels concerned in the affair, and though the idea seems to be absurd and far-fetched yet it is my impression that twenty years ago when my cottage was plundered and my wife murdered, when this master devil came across my private papers, making the discovery that I was a scion of a noble English house, the idea came to him to steal the documents, hoping to profit by so doing in the future."

"His original intention may have been to sell the papers to me, thinking that the time might come when I would be glad to pay a good round sum for them."

"Ah, yes, that is quite likely."

"Years passed away, I had disappeared and all the world believed me to be dead, so the rascal was not able to carry out his scheme. Then came this bequest from my brother; the knowledge of it came to this scoundrel and he conceived the plan of personating me and so secure this vast sum of money. His gang could aid him by appearing as witnesses. It may be possible, you know, that this old-time gamekeeper, Job Hodkins, is a confederate of this man."

"Very likely indeed!"

"And now it will be my endeavor to unmask this schemer, and to catch him in a trap if possible, for it is clear to me that no one but the murderer of my unfortunate wife could have obtained these papers."

"Quite true!"

"So I am urged onward by a sacred duty; the murderer of my poor girl must be punished; and I trust I may count upon your aid?"

"Oh, yes, to the fullest extent, and I am the more ready to extend it because I am ready to admit I am mortified when I think how ready I was to believe this scoundrel's cleverly devised tale, but now that my eyes are open I realize that a most cunning villain is this so-called Greek gentleman, Mr. Philip Anselmo."

Camilla uttered a cry of surprise.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CAMILLA'S SCHEME.

THE gentlemen looked at her in surprise.

"I know this man, Philip Anselmo," Camilla explained. "He resides at my hotel."

"Ah, then you can tell us what he is like," Monteth remarked.

"Oh, yes!"

And then the girl related all the particulars of her strange meeting with the Greek.

"An extremely romantic episode!" the father declared.

"But it strikes me as being rather odd that he should happen to be in the neighborhood so as to come so promptly to your assistance," Monteth added.

"Wasn't the whole thing a contrived affair, got up for the purpose of giving this Greek a chance to play the hero?" the old lawyer exclaimed, his suspicions aroused.

"It is possible that you have hit upon the truth," Camilla remarked.

"Really, to be exact, I must say I took so little interest in the man that I never troubled myself to speculate about the matter."

"How has he conducted himself since the time of the meeting?" the father asked.

"Well, I have met him half a dozen times, perhaps, in the corridors of the hotel, and on these occasions have exchanged a few words with him; but, as I said, I took so little interest in the man that I paid no particular attention to him, replying to his greetings as I would to any other chance acquaintance."

"I think there is a fair probability that Mr. Ruthven's surmise is correct, and this so-called Greek did arrange this attack on you on purpose to afford him an opportunity of playing the rôle of a hero," Monteth observed.

"But what was his object?" Camilla inquired. "A cool and calculating adventurer, such as this fellow evidently is, does not do such work without a well-defined plan."

"That is very true," the father assented. "But it is not an easy matter to guess the game that the man had in view."

"Do you think he has any idea as to who I really am?" the girl inquired, thoughtfully.

"Oh, no; I do not believe that can be possible," the father replied.

"You, yourself, were not aware of the facts in the case until the chapter of accidents brought us together."

"Yes, that is the truth; and so it seems to me it cannot be at all probable he can know that I am the daughter of the man who is the heir to this great estate," the girl observed.

"I think it more likely that he had formed the idea of making you a victim," Monteth said, in a thoughtful way. "You dress well, possess valuable jewelry, and this man—an adventurer always on the watch for plunder—thought there would be an opportunity for him to do a little business."

"You were alone, a stranger without a protector, and he, no doubt, calculated that it would not be a difficult matter for him to secure some of your wealth."

"I rather think you have hit upon the truth," the lawyer assented. "The man most certainly possesses brains, and is quite capable of getting up a scheme of the kind."

"An idea has come to me," Camilla exclaimed, abruptly. "Would it not be a good idea for me to turn the tables upon this wily schemer—to try upon him the game which he intended to play upon me—beat him with his own weapons, trickery and deceit?"

"So far I have not responded warmly to his advances, for, as I took no interest in him, I did not care to encourage his attentions; but now I will smile upon him just as if I had suddenly come to the conclusion that he was an extremely agreeable gentleman."

"Then, if he attempts to woo me, I will be coy and explain that as I have plenty of money I am fearful of becoming the prey of a fortune-hunter."

"This will be the cue for him to explain his position, and in order to convince me that he is no reckless adventurer who seeks me only because I am wealthy, he will be apt to tell me of his vast expectations and show that he is certain of clutching a fortune."

"The idea is a capital one!" the father exclaimed. "You will play the part of a siren and lure the man on to his destruction."

"A very excellent scheme indeed!" the Scotchman added. "And it seems to me the chances are very good that you will be successful."

"I will surely try hard, and if I fail it will not be my fault," the girl announced.

"And in the mean time I will lead the man on all I can," the lawyer remarked.

"If there is a conspiracy, he will soon produce the witnesses by whose aid he expects to prove that he is James Fitzherbert, and when we learn who these men are we can take measures to ascertain all the particulars in regard to them."

"The idea is, you know, to encourage the man to believe that all is smooth sailing and that I am convinced he is the person he pretends to be."

"Yes, I understand, and if under such circumstances he does not make some false move, so as to give us a chance at him, it will be very strange indeed," Monteth declared.

This brought the interview to an end, and after a few unimportant words the father and daughter departed.

"One important advantage we have in this struggle of wits," Monteth remarked, as the two proceeded up-town.

"We are securely ambushed, and our adversary can have no knowledge that a foe is eagerly watching all his movements, prepared to strike a blow whenever there is an opportunity."

"Yes, we are in the dark, all our actions hidden, while his moves will all be known to us."

"The chances are great that he has no suspicion that the man whom he pretends to be is in the land of the living," the father observed. "He believes the heir to be dead, and so is not afraid to announce that he is James Fitzherbert."

"You see my idea was correct, that in time the villain who stained his hands in blood years ago would come forward, and with his own hands dig the pitfall destined to engulf him. 'The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine!'" Monteth announced.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN ACCIDENT.

AFTER Camilla determined to play the rôle of a siren, she did not allow the grass to grow under her feet, as the saying is.

When she encountered the Greek in the corridor of the hotel after dinner—she took pains to go to the "ladies' parlor" after the meal, and loiter there until she saw the gentleman passing through the hall—she greeted him smilingly and stopped to chat a moment.

The usual small nothings in regard to the weather were spoken, and then Anselmo, acting on the motto that fortune favors the brave, remarked that he had just taken a horse on trial, and he wished he were sufficiently well acquainted with Miss Selden to take the liberty of inviting her to take a ride, as he was just going out for the purpose of testing the goodness of the animal.

Camilla played the character of a willful, capricious beauty to the life.

She laughed, pretended to be a trifle confused by the offer, and then said:

"Oh, well, in the States, I don't suppose that the people stand upon as much ceremony as in England, and I really cannot see what harm would be done if I accept your invitation."

The gentleman protested that he would be vastly pleased and honored if she would only consent to accompany him, and Camilla, after pretending to hesitate for a few moments, agreed to go.

A half an hour later the pair were driving up Broadway.

The "rig" was an extremely handsome one, the carriage a "sidebar" buggy of the latest pattern, drawn by a coal-black beast, evidently a high mettled steed by the way he carried himself.

"This is a horse with a record," the Greek exclaimed. "He is warranted to trot in two-thirty, which to my notion is quite fast enough for all road purposes."

"He is a handsome animal, but seems to be a little too spirited," Camilla remarked.

The girl was a good judge of a horse, and did not like the way the steed behaved.

"Yes, he is undoubtedly rather free, but as he is warranted to be gentle and well-behaved, I do not regard that as a fault."

"When we get out of the city on a country road, I will give him a chance to show what he can do," the gentleman replied.

Anselmo was a good driver, and although the horse was disposed to be a little ugly, there being so many objects in a street like New York's great avenue calculated to make a restive horse prance, yet he managed to keep the steed well in hand until Central Park was reached.

"Now I will be able to let him trot a little," the Greek remarked, as they drove through the gate.

"I am always averse to speeding a horse in a crowded street for fear of accidents," he explained.

"Nine out of ten of the drivers whom you meet in the streets of a great city know nothing at all about horses, and are no more fit to drive than so many children, and a man with a high-spirited horse of this kind must be very careful how he proceeds if he wishes to avoid a mishap."

"Oh, yes, these young men who drive the business wagons are very reckless."

"I cannot allow him to show what he can really do here in the Park," Anselmo remarked, as he allowed the horse to quicken his pace a little.

"It is against the law to drive beyond a certain rate of speed in the Park, but after we get on the upper road I will give him a better chance."

But it was no easy task for the Greek to hold the horse in until the end of the Park was reached, for the animal wanted to go and fought persistently for an opportunity to go at the top of his speed.

The Greek's attention was so taken up by the animal that he was only able to exchange a word every now and then with his companion.

Thank Heaven, we are at the end of the Park!" he exclaimed, as they approached the upper gate.

"This sort of thing is entirely too much like work to suit me," he continued. "And now that I have a tolerably clear road for miles, I will allow him to go ahead as fast as he likes!"

The horse was prompt to avail himself of the opportunity, and the moment the driver relaxed his pull, away went the animal in a tremendous burst of speed.

For a good ten minutes the Greek had all he could do to manage the beast, for as soon as he felt that his head was free, the horse "bolted" and endeavored to run away, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the driver managed to retain any control over him.

The beast plunged and kicked, and seemed determined by his wild movements to free himself from the harness and vehicle, and if Anselmo had not been an experienced and clear-headed driver, there is not much doubt the horse would have got away, and, in all probability, wrecked the carriage.

At last the Greek succeeded in getting the

horse down to a trot, and the beast went up the avenue at a terrific rate of speed.

"That was a hard struggle," the gentleman remarked, after he had succeeded in getting control of the horse again.

"Indeed it was!" Camilla exclaimed.

"At one time I was a little afraid that he was going to get away from me. You see, the fact of the matter is, the brute has been standing in the stable for three or four days and has not been exercised, so, when he got out, he was like a wild horse."

"Yes, he appeared to be determined to run away, and I must compliment you upon your skill as a driver," Camilla remarked.

"You certainly are wonderfully expert, and if you had not been, we would undoubtedly have met with a dreadful accident."

"Well, the beast was inclined to run, and I did have a hard fight with him," the Greek admitted. "And though I am averse to boasting, yet it is the truth that, if I had not had a deal of experience with horses, the brute would have got away from me, but he is all right now."

Hardly had the words left his lips when the horse made another bolt, just as if he could understand what had been said and was desirous of showing that he was far from being conquered.

This time it was a good twenty minutes before Anselmo could get the mettlesome beast down to his trot again.

The horse had traveled so fast that Yonkers was passed before the second contest ended.

They had diverged from the main avenue and were riding along a country road where the houses were few and far between.

"I am not well-acquainted with this neighborhood, and I fancy that my fight with this brute has caused me to take a wrong turn," Anselmo remarked, as he was examining the surroundings.

"I do not know; being a stranger, I am not acquainted with the locality."

"By taking this little road to the right I think we can get back to the main avenue again," Anselmo said, as he turned into the lane of which he spoke.

By this time all the fight was taken out of the horse, and he was content to go along like a well-behaved beast.

The road was a narrow one and apparently but little used, and the Greek made the remark that it reminded him of country lanes in England along which he had driven.

"Yes, that is the truth," Camilla assented.

"It is very much like an English lane."

Then Anselmo happened to cast his eyes upon one of the rear wheels, and immediately pulled up his horse.

"There is something the matter there," he announced. "And I had better take a look at it before we go any further."

Then he dismounted from the carriage and examined the wheel.

"This is unlucky!" he exclaimed. "The nut is loose and the wheel is likely to come off at any moment."

"Dear me! that is really too bad," the girl declared.

"Yes, and it is a fortunate thing that I happened to discover it, for if we had gone on we should undoubtedly have met with a bad accident."

"What shall we do?"

"There is a house a little way on, and I think you had best seek shelter there while I go with the carriage."

"There must be a blacksmith shop in the neighborhood somewhere, and in a few minutes the missing nut can be replaced, then I can return for you."

"I do not suppose you will mind claiming hospitality from a stranger under the circumstances?"

"Oh, no, besides it will only be for a little while."

"Not over half an hour at the outside."

"I do not object."

"As long as there isn't any weight in the carriage it will probably run all right until I get to the blacksmith's," the Greek remarked.

Then he assisted Camilla to alight and the pair proceeded to the house, Anselmo leading the horse.

A suspicion entered the girl's mind that all was not right, but notwithstanding this she made up her mind to go on.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ENTRAPPED.

WHEN the two reached the house, they found that it was an old-fashioned rambling sort of a cottage, completely surrounded by a high stone wall, entrance through which was by means of an iron gate.

At one time in the past it had evidently been a handsome place but had been neglected, and now everything looked to be in very bad order indeed.

"It does not seem to be very inviting," the Greek remarked with a doubtful shake of the head, as he surveyed the grounds overgrown with weeds.

"Oh, it does not matter. All I want is shelter for a little while, although for that matter I need not really go to the house at all. I can wait for you here."

"I think you will be much more comfortable if you go to the house," the gentleman remarked.

"There isn't any place for you to rest here, and I may be detained longer than I think."

"I do not mind going, but do you think that there is any one living there? The house seems to be deserted."

"No, I think not; there are curtains to the windows."

"True, I did not notice them."

And then just as the girl finished the sentence the massive old-fashioned door of the house opened and a neatly-dressed, but rather hard-faced middle-aged woman appeared.

"It is an enchanted palace and there comes the guardian angel!" the Greek exclaimed with a light laugh.

"Well, she looks rather sour-faced for an angel, but as she seems to be a respectable woman I shall not have any hesitation in claiming her hospitality for awhile," Camilla replied.

"Will you speak to her, for I dare not leave this high-spirited beast for fear he will take it into his head to make a speedy departure."

"Certainly."

"I will wait until you ascertain whether you can have shelter or not. I hardly think she will refuse, but if she does we can go on to the next house."

"It cannot be very far off, although it is not in sight."

"Oh, I do not think there is a doubt about the matter, but I will speedily ascertain," the girl said.

Then she proceeded up the walk and, addressing the woman, explained what had occurred, asking if she might have shelter for a half-hour or so.

"Why, of course!" the woman exclaimed in a very civil way indeed. "I am glad to be able to accommodate you!"

"I am just here to take care of the house, you know, but that does not make any difference; I can make you just as comfortable as though I owned it."

"I am very much obliged!" Camilla replied.

"Don't mention it!" said the woman.

Then the girl reported to the Greek that she could remain there until his return.

"I will be back as soon as possible," he remarked, and then took his departure, while Camilla entered the house.

The woman conducted her into a plainly-furnished apartment in the rear of the house, passing through a long entry.

This passage extended through the middle of the house, after the old-fashioned way, with rooms on both sides of it.

The massive front door closed with a hollow clang after Camilla passed through, and the thought came to the girl that it sounded like the jar of a prison gate.

And there was the peculiar disagreeable smell about the house which is usually to be experienced in jails and similar buildings.

Altogether the place impressed the girl most unfavorably.

The room to which the woman conducted Camilla was a good-sized apartment, fitted up as a bed-chamber.

All the furniture was old-fashioned, but in good condition, and everything was as neat as wax.

"You must excuse my introducing you into my bedroom," the woman said, as she hastened to place a chair for Camilla's accommodation. "But it is about the only room in the house really fit for use, as the others have been shut up so long that they are all damp and disagreeable."

"Oh, I shall be quite comfortable here," the girl replied. "And I am much obliged to you for your kindness."

"Don't mention it, miss. I am happy to be able to accommodate you."

"Wouldn't you like a glass of wine and a bit of something to eat?" the woman asked, evidently desirous of being hospitable.

"No, thank you; I could not think of putting you to any such trouble."

"Oh, it is no trouble, bless you!" the woman replied. "I am English, you see, and we English people generally take good care of ourselves."

Then from a closet in a corner of the room she produced a decanter of wine and a plate of sweet biscuit.

Despite the pains the woman was taking to make herself agreeable, and her guest comfortable, there was something about her which impressed Camilla unfavorably, and as long experience had taught the girl that it was always well to be on her guard, the moment the woman proffered the refreshments the thought came to Camilla that it was possible there was something wrong about the matter—the offer might cover a trap.

She knew that the Greek was a scoundrel, and it was within the bounds of probability that this riding trip had been devised by him for the express purpose of getting her into his power.

The idea did not come to her though until the woman pressed her to partake of refreshments.

When the accident occurred to the carriage no suspicion of treachery entered the mind of the girl, but now that she had had time to reflect upon the matter she saw that she really was not sure there had been anything the matter with the buggy.

True, he had announced that one of the nuts of a wheel was loose, and she knew enough about carriages to understand that if a nut could not retain its hold upon the axle the wheel was certain to come off, and so disable the vehicle, but she was not certain that this tale of a loose nut was true.

She had not seen the loose nut, and it might exist only in the imagination of her companion.

The offer of the refreshments caused her to be suspicious that the Greek had some deep purpose in view, her idea being that the wine was drugged.

She had heard of such things, although she had no actual experience in that line.

Why the Greek should take the trouble to get her into his power was a mystery—a puzzle which she could not solve, but there was no doubt in her mind that he had some good reason for the movement.

The woman drew a small table to the side of the rocking-chair in which Camilla sat, placed the refreshments upon it, and poured out a couple of glasses of wine.

"This is port," the woman said, "and I know that it is a good wine, for I get it from a cousin of mine who is a steward on one of the English steamers."

"I am very much obliged to you indeed, but I fear I am putting you to a great deal of trouble for nothing, for wine is something that I seldom take," Camilla replied.

"Oh, well, a little drop like this will not hurt you any!" the other asserted. "I think it is perfectly splendid!"

And to give due emphasis to her words she drained the glass like an old toper.

"Ah! that goes to the right spot!" she exclaimed, smacking her lips in token that she highly enjoyed the draught.

Then she refilled her glass.

"Don't be afraid of it, for you will find that it will do you good," the woman continued, and again she lifted the glass to her lips.

This proceeding removed Camilla's suspicion in regard to the wine being drugged, for the woman could not have drank it thus freely if it was unless she had previously taken an antidote to prevent the drug from affecting her.

This was the wild idea that shot through Camilla's mind as she reflected upon the matter; it was absurd of course, and she immediately dismissed the suggestion.

But though she thought there wasn't any doubt now that the wine had not been tampered with, yet she did not intend to drink it, merely sipping a few drops, notwithstanding the solicitations of the woman to drink freely, who set the example by taking three glasses of the generous liquor.

"These are nothing but thimbles—these glasses!" she exclaimed. "It would take a half-dozen of them to make one good draught."

"In England I lived in a nobleman's family, and the master never let a day pass that he did not drink a bottle of port with his dinner."

Then the woman happened to glance at a clock which was ticking on the mantel-piece.

"Oh, I had no idea it was so late!" she declared. "I have a letter to write, and if you will excuse me for a few moments I will set about it."

"Certainly! pray do not let me detain you," Camilla replied.

"It will not take me long, and you will find plenty of books upon the table to help you pass the time away."

"You are very kind, indeed."

"Don't mention it!"

And then the woman departed.

Camilla did not trouble the books, but leaned back in her chair and gazed through the window into the desolate, weed-overgrown garden.

It was anything but a cheerful prospect, and the ancient window, with its small panes of discolored glass, framed in extra heavy panels, strongly reminded her of the casement of a prison.

"I should surely have a terrible fit of the blues if I had to remain long in this dismal place!" the girl exclaimed, as she gazed upon the cheerless prospect.

"I shall be very glad indeed when the time comes for me to depart, for this melancholy old place really depresses my spirits."

Time passed on, and after an hour elapsed without any one coming near her, Camilla grew impatient.

"I will not remain longer," she declared, rising and proceeding to the door.

It was locked.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A REVELATION.

THE girl was amazed, and for a moment thought there must be some mistake about the matter.

"The lock sticks, probably!" she exclaimed.

"It cannot be possible that the door is locked!"

Then she tried the handle again, and as before found that it was not possible for her to open the door, but from the easy way in which the knob worked it did not seem as if there was anything the matter with the lock.

"This is certainly very strange," she muttered, as she retreated a pace and looked at the portal with the air of one suddenly confronted with a great mystery.

"The door has been locked from the outside, there is not a doubt that it is so, and now the question arises—is it through accident or design?"

It was a riddle over which the girl pondered with compressed brows.

For fully five minutes Camilla remained as motionless as a statue, staring at the unconscious wooden barrier as though she thought that by so doing she could find a solution of the puzzle.

Then she spoke again, in an abrupt and decided way:

"One thing is certain—I am a prisoner, whether made so by accident or design, and the quicker I set about seeing if there is any avenue of escape open for me, the better."

The eyes of the girl wandered around the room until they rested upon the one window.

"There is a way unless it is fastened in such a manner that it will not be possible for me to open it!" Camilla exclaimed.

She hastened to the casement.

As far as she could see, it was not fastened at all, for no device for that purpose met her eyes, but when she tried to raise the sash, she found she could not.

The window was as firm as though it was not intended to be moved.

The girl examined the casement in the most careful manner; she prided herself upon the keenness of her eyes, but she was not able to ascertain why she could not raise the sash.

"I begin to believe that this is no accident," she said at last, after satisfying herself that it was merely a waste of time to attempt to move the window.

"Well, I suppose I may as well possess my soul with patience," she continued. "In time some one will call, and then I will surely learn the meaning of this strange proceeding, although I haven't much doubt now in regard to what the explanation will be."

"I have been entrapped by the Greek. That, I think, is certain, but what he expects to gain by this desperate movement is a mystery."

"I don't suppose that it will be of much use to examine the room with the idea of finding some avenue of escape, for the man who was cunning enough to lure me into this trap would be certain to satisfy himself in advance that the cage could be trusted to hold the bird, but it will not do any harm for me to take a look around."

It only took a few moments for the girl to satisfy herself that the prison chamber into which she had been so cunningly entrapped was amply strong enough to hold her.

There were two doors and a window in the room.

The entrance door was securely locked, the other led into a good-sized closet, and there was no chance for her to escape by means of the window, as she had discovered.

"Patience, patience," she murmured, as she resumed her seat in the rocking-chair. "In time I shall know all about the matter."

"At present the advantage is on the side of this cunning scoundrel; he has taken the first trick in the game, but now it shall be my care that he does not secure another."

Then she fell to meditating, and pondered deeply over the situation.

"After all, I am not certain but what I can turn the affair to advantage," she mused.

"It was my idea to lure the Greek on—to play the part of a syren—to oppose my wits to his, and in time contrive a snare which would bind him fast."

"Perhaps this affair will afford me an opportunity. It is hardly possible that the man can know who I really am, for if he did he would hardly take such a step as this it seems to me, unless indeed he got the idea in his head that I would be a valuable witness to prove my father's identity, and then how can he know that my father is alive, and in New York, ready to dispute his claim that he is the long-absent heir?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed after pondering on the subject for a few moments. "It would border on the marvelous for this scoundrel to be so well informed, and the most reasonable explanation of the mystery is that the Greek marked me for a victim, believing me to be a rich, young Englishwoman, and upon thinking the matter over came to the conclusion that it would be a hard matter to make a fool of me, and so determined to resort to this desperate game in order to get me into his power. But what his next move will be is a mystery, and as I said before, all I can do is to possess my soul with patience and wait."

Having come to this conclusion Camilla pre-

pared herself to pass the time as comfortably as possible.

She examined the books upon the table, found one that seemed likely to prove interesting, and was soon absorbed in its contents.

For over an hour she read on as calmly as though seated in her own apartment, and then the light began to grow dim as a sign that night was coming on.

Camilla raised her eyes from her book and looked thoughtfully through the window, and as she did so a strange thing happened.

The closet door stood open a foot or so, as the girl had not been careful to shut it after her examination, and now it shut of itself.

Her eyes were on the door when it started, and she was amazed to see it close as though moved by invisible hands.

"Well, well, this is really marvelous!" she declared, communing with herself in whispered tones.

"If I was weak enough to believe in the supernatural I should be certain to come to the conclusion that I had just got into a haunted house, but as I am a most decided skeptic in regard to ghosts and hobgoblins of all kinds I am forced to come to the conclusion that it is certain the door has been moved by human agency."

"I am utterly in the dark though as to the meaning of this peculiar manifestation, for that it has some meaning I feel quite certain. The round of time will bring the explanation, of course, and I have a suspicion too that I will not have long to wait."

Having come to this conclusion the girl laid aside her book and occupied herself with watching the twilight deepen through the window, ever and anon casting a glance at the door of the closet.

Her suspicion that the peculiar movement of the door had some meaning was soon verified.

In about ten minutes from the time she began her watch the door opened and the hard-faced woman appeared bearing a tray upon which was a plentiful repast.

After the woman was in the room the closet door closed again without her being obliged to put her hand to it, and Camilla, being a quick-witted girl, understood that it was operated by concealed machinery, and the idea of the closet was to allow any one to enter the room without making use of the door.

"Really, it is wonderful the care with which everything has been contrived in this matter," Camilla muttered under her breath as the woman advanced and placed the tray upon the table.

"I have brought you your supper, miss," she said in the most matter-of-fact way possible, just as if there wasn't anything out of the common in this affair.

"I am very much obliged to you, I am sure," Camilla replied with a gracious bend of her head, and an extra sweet smile.

"But I do not think I will be obliged to remain here long enough to eat anything. The gentleman who brought me here will soon come and then I will depart."

The woman cast a searching glance at Camilla's face as though she would read the girl's very soul, then she said, slowly:

"You look as if you were capable of understanding."

"Well, I certainly think I am!" Camilla replied.

"And in that case I do not see that there is any need of beating about the bush, for you might as well know the truth first as last."

"Yes, that is undoubtedly a fact, and therefore I hope you will explain this strange affair as soon as possible, for I confess I am utterly at a loss to understand the matter, but as far as I can make out I am a prisoner here."

"Yes, that is on account of your affliction, you know."

"My affliction?" cried Camilla in great amazement.

"Exactly! you are not quite right in your head."

"Oh, indeed?"

"And this is a private mad-house."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SECURE CAGE.

CAMILLA did not betray any surprise at this revelation, much to the woman's astonishment, for she had expected that the announcement would strike terror to the soul of the girl.

"A private mad-house, eh?" Camilla inquired, in much the same way as a stranger would have questioned concerning a hotel.

"Yes, and as I said, you might as well know the character of the house in which you are."

"That is true; but what has this to do with me? You spoke a moment ago of my affliction; do you mean that you think there is anything the matter with me?"

"Of course, or else you would not be here!" the woman exclaimed, in a surprised tone.

"Oh, but my presence here is due to an accident," Camilla remarked.

"I was not brought here, you understand, but simply came for shelter on account of the accident to the carriage in which I was riding."

There was a faint hope in the mind of the girl that there might be some mistake about the matter.

A patient was expected, and as she had arrived at the time set for the coming of the sufferer, the woman had by some stupid blunder mistaken her for the new guest.

If she had not known that the Greek was a rascal, she would have been certain that this was the true explanation of the mystery, but being aware that he was a most consummate scoundrel, the thought haunted her that there had not been any mistake, but, on the contrary, she was the victim of a carefully devised plot.

A grim smile appeared on the hard face of the woman.

"Oh, yes, it looked like an accident, I know, but it wasn't anything of the kind," she declared.

"I suppose your friends thought they would have trouble in getting you to come if you knew the character of the place, and so they used a little stratagem in order to get you to enter."

"Oh, no, you are in error," Camilla replied, immediately. "I haven't any friends who could make a mistake of this kind. I am a stranger in the city—a native and resident of another land, and so no such error could occur. It is you who have made a mistake, and you have confounded me with some one else."

The woman shook her head in a stolid way.

"You feel quite certain that this is not the case?" the girl questioned.

"Oh, I don't think there is any doubt that you are the one whom I expected," the woman declared.

"You must excuse me for speaking so bluntly," she continued. "But, you see, I have got used to hearing the people who come here protest that they are all right, and there isn't anything the matter with them, so that the talk doesn't make much impression upon me."

"Well, in my case you will find that it is not a delusion, for I am as sane as you are!" Camilla exclaimed.

"Come now! look me straight in the eye and see if you can detect any signs of madness there."

"Oh, well, I am not a doctor, you know," the woman replied in rather a sullen way.

"I know that well enough, but if you are a nurse, brought in daily contact with insane patients, you ought to be a good judge—as good as any doctor, really," the girl declared.

"I don't set myself up for possessing much knowledge of such things," the woman said, slowly. "In fact, I have only been here a little while, and so I have not had much experience."

This remark did not deceive Camilla, for she saw that the woman did not wish to give an opinion, and so stronger and stronger grew her impression that she was not only the victim of a plot, but that the woman was conscious of the fact. She was not a dupe but a confederate.

"Of course I am not a particularly good judge of such a case, but still I think that if I had any experience at all I should be able to make a pretty good guess as to whether a person was insane or not," Camilla observed.

"It isn't my business to make guesses," the woman replied, tartly. "I am paid my wages to do certain things and I do not bother my head about matters which do not concern me."

"Ah, yes, I understand," Camilla remarked, her lip curling in contempt. "It does not make any difference to you whether the patients are insane or not so long as you get your wages all right."

"Yes, that is the truth," the other admitted. "You see I am honest about the matter, and I don't pretend to be any better than I am."

"It will then be merely a waste of time for me to try to convince you that I am not crazy."

"That is true enough for I haven't anything to do with the matter. I cannot let you out no matter if I was perfectly sure that you were as sane as I am."

"But you could represent to the doctors that there had been a mistake made in regard to me," the girl urged.

"That would not do any good," the woman replied.

"If I were to interfere in the matter I would be speedily told that it was none of my business, and I might lose my place by so doing too."

"The doctors understand their business and they would not thank me for interfering."

Camilla was too clear-headed not to understand that it was useless to talk further on the subject, for it was plain that no impression could be made upon this hard-hearted jailer.

"When may I expect a visit from the doctor?" she asked.

"Not before morning, I think," was the reply. "It is just possible he may come to-night, but I don't think that it is likely."

"Well, as I cannot help myself, I shall have to wait patiently until he comes," the girl observed, with a resigned air.

"Yes, you will have to have patience, and as you are pretty comfortable here, you ought to get along nicely."

"Oh, as far as that goes I don't suppose that I will suffer, excepting in my feelings, for it

most certainly is extremely disagreeable to be shut up in a mad-house while I am conscious that I am in complete possession of all my senses."

"If any mistake has been made, the doctor will make it all right," the woman remarked, in a manner which she intended to be consoling. "And if I were you, I would not worry about the matter, for it will not do any good. You have got to remain here, and you might as well make up your mind at once to be contented."

"Yes, I suppose I will have to stay here unless I succeed in making my escape," Camilla observed, in a bantering way, with a glance at the window.

"Oh, there isn't any chance of your being able to do that!" the other exclaimed, immediately. "And if you are wise, you will put all thoughts of that kind out of your mind, for although this is nothing but an old-fashioned parlor, yet you will find it will be as difficult for you to make your escape as though it was a prison cell."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, indeed!" the woman affirmed, with a decided shake of the head.

"The doors are made of hard wood, very thick and strong, and a powerful man, armed with an ax, would find that it required hard work for him to make his way through them."

"But there is the window," Camilla suggested.

"No bars on it, eh?" the woman remarked, with a sardonic smile.

"No, and what is to prevent me from escaping through it?"

"Well, in the first place, it is securely nailed, and you will notice, too, that the sash-bars are unusually strong, and unless you had a weapon you could not break them; then, too, any attempt of that kind would make a noise, and although this is one of the asylums where no force is used excepting what is absolutely necessary, yet we have strait-jackets and other means of restraining patients who are disposed to be unruly."

"And I have no doubt that you would not hesitate to use them if you found I was trying to escape."

"Certainly, of course. And even if you succeeded in getting through the window into the garden, there is a large and savage bulldog there who would tear you all to pieces; his vigilance is sleepless, too."

"I see I must make up my mind to remain here until I can convince the doctor that a mistake has been made in regard to my case."

"Yes, take matters calmly; you will find it by far the best way."

And with this admonition the woman departed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BAFFLED.

ALEXANDER BOUDINOT and James Monteth sat together in the cozy parlor of the latter.

They were awaiting the coming of Camilla, and wondered at her absence, for the hands of the clock upon the mantel pointed to the hour of nine.

After the girl discovered the truth in regard to her father, she had revealed all the particulars of the strange story to the young man, and introduced him as her future husband to the parent from whom she had been parted so long.

The two men took a liking to each other immediately, and when the particulars of the scheme to entrap the wily adventurer was made known to Boudinot, he earnestly asked to be allowed to lend a hand to bring the scheming scoundrel to justice; his proposal was naturally welcomed by both father and daughter, and so it happened that on this particular evening of which we write the two sat in converse.

"It is strange that Camilla does not come," the father remarked, with a glance at the clock.

"Yes, she said that I might expect her to arrive about eight o'clock."

"And it is now nine," Monteth observed.

"It is extremely odd, for Camilla is one of the girls who can be depended upon to keep an appointment; I have never known her to be late."

"Something must have happened to detain her—nothing out of the way, I hope," the father remarked, with a grave look.

"Camilla is certainly able to take care of herself under any ordinary circumstances," Boudinot said, in a thoughtful way. "But I must admit that I do not like this idea which she has of playing the syren so as to entrap this cunning rascal who aspires to seize upon a princely inheritance."

"I do not doubt either Camilla's courage nor ability, but to my thinking the risk is too great."

"Yes, I certainly had doubts myself in regard to the matter," Monteth replied. "But she was so sanguine of success, and so eager to make the attempt, that, in spite of my better judgment, I allowed her to go ahead."

"There is little doubt that this so-called Greek is an uncommonly smart rascal, bold and desperate, too, just the man who would not hesitate to strike a blow at any one who was in his way," the young lover declared.

"I see that the same thought which entered my mind has occurred to you also," Monteth observed.

"You fear there is danger that the fellow, having made the discovery that Camilla is on his track, has adopted some violent measures to avert the danger which threatens him."

"Yes, you have read my thought aright."

"We will wait for a quarter of an hour longer, and if Camilla does not come in that time, then I think it will be wise for us to proceed in search of her."

Boudinot thought that this was admirable, and said as much.

So the pair waited in silence until the hands of the clock showed that it was a quarter past nine, then the father rose to his feet, and the lover followed his example.

"I fear that some mischance has come to her, and I think the quicker we proceed to look into the matter the better," Monteth declared.

"You are right, I think, and we ought to set about the matter at once."

Having come to this conclusion, the two went forth.

They proceeded directly to the hotel and inquired for Miss Selden.

The clerk ascertained that the key of her room was not in the office, and so came to the conclusion that she was in, but when one of the bell-boys was dispatched to summon her he returned with the message that she was not in her room.

Then the hotel detective was summoned, the genial Billy Chambers, and to this astute personage the father confided his apprehensions that there was something wrong about the absence of the young lady.

He explained that the girl had undertaken a task which a certain determined and desperate man might construe as an attack upon him if the fact that the girl had entered upon the quest came to his knowledge, and from what he—Monteth—knew of the party, he did not doubt that the man might proceed to violent measures in order to protect himself.

"Well, gentlemen, she could hardly come to grief in the hotel here, you know," the detective remarked. "And the fact that the key of her room is not in the office does not prove that she is in the house."

"It is the custom, of course, for guests to leave the key in the office when they go out, but they do not always do so, and it is very probable that she has gone out and taken the key with her, but I can easily ascertain the truth in regard to the matter."

"The doorkeeper in charge of the ladies' entrance is a sensible fellow and a man who usually keeps his eyes open, and when the lady is described to him, it is very likely that he will be able to remember whether she went out or came in."

"As she dresses very soberly in black, it is probable that he will remember her," the father observed.

"Yes, I think so."

And then the detective led the way to where the doorkeeper sat at his post.

When the girl was described to him, the man replied immediately that he remembered her.

"She was a perfect lady," he declared, "and was always particular to thank me when I opened the door for her. She went out this afternoon about three o'clock and came back somewhere around six."

"You are sure about this?" the detective asked.

"Oh, yes," the man answered, confidently. "I am certain about the time she came in, for it was just dusk—just before the gas was lit—and she came in with three other ladies. I had just got up to attend to the gas when she passed, and I knew her by her dress, although, as I was busy at the time, I didn't take any particular notice of her."

"And you are certain that she did not go out again?" Billy Chambers asked, a little puzzled by this information.

"Yes, I am positive about it."

"But have you been on duty ever since?"

"Yes, sir; I had my supper before she came in."

"She is apparently in the house then somewhere," the detective said to the others as they turned away. "I will question the bell-boys and see if she got the key from any one of them."

Fortune favored the questioner, for the first boy he accosted was the one who had given the key to the lady when she came in, about dusk, as he said.

He was a dull, stupid youth, and all he knew about the matter was that a lady in black had asked him for the key to her room, and he mentioned the number she gave.

"And you got it for her?" Chambers said, decidedly puzzled.

"Yes, sir, and then she went up-stairs."

The boy's description of the lady was a vague one; she was young, pretty, and dressed in black,

but it was distinct enough to satisfy the gentlemen that it was Miss Selden.

Then too the fact that the lady had asked for, and received, the key of Camilla's room, was proof positive to the minds of all three that it was the girl.

"She must be in the house—probably paying a visit to some other lady," the detective said, after he dismissed the boy.

"I do not think that is likely," the father remarked. "She had an appointment with us at my house at eight o'clock, and it is very improbable indeed that she should have forgotten, or neglected to keep it, for she was very methodical and could be depended upon in all such matters."

"Well, it certainly does seem to be rather odd," the detective replied. "But under the circumstances the explanation that she is paying a visit seems to be the only reasonable one, for it appears to be certain that she came into the house and has not gone out again."

"I think I can get at the rights of this matter pretty speedily though," Billy Chambers continued. "Miss Selden's maid is indebted to me for some favors, and I have no doubt she will be quite willing to tell me all she knows about her mistress's movements."

But the mystery was not destined to be solved as easily as the detective anticipated, for when he inquired for the maid he found she was not in the hotel.

Then he proceeded to make a room-to-room search for the missing girl.

The investigation was not productive of any results, for none of the ladies knew aught of Camilla.

Then Maggie Chambers came in, and her brother immediately took her to one side and questioned her concerning her mistress.

But Maggie was not able to give any information, for she had gone out before dinner to make a call and knew nothing of Camilla's movements.

"Well, gentlemen, I am beat!" the detective declared. "The only explanation of the riddle as far as I can see, is that she must have gone out without the doorkeeper's knowledge."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FATHER LEMUEL.

As the detective was obliged to admit that he could aid them no further, the pair had to depart no wiser than when they entered the portals of the hotel.

They walked slowly to the corner and there halted, their faces dark with care.

"I do not like the looks of this affair at all," Monteth remarked, with a grave shake of the head.

"No, neither do I," Boudinot replied, his voice deepened by the dull weight of apprehension.

"There is a mystery about the matter which fills my soul with anxiety. If Camilla left the hotel this evening, passing by the doorkeeper without his knowledge, as the detective surmises, how does it happen that she did not come directly to us?"

"Yes, she most surely would have done so; but is it not possible that the detective's conjecture is correct in regard to her leaving the hotel, and that she has been entrapped while on her way to Harlem?" the young lover suggested.

The father meditated for a few moments, and then said:

"It really looks as if you had hit upon the truth. As the detective said, no harm could come to her in the hotel, for if aught had befallen her within the walls of the building, it would be speedily known."

"That is my idea, but if this scoundrel discovered that she was endeavoring to entrap him, it would be very likely indeed that he should hatch some plot so as to get her into his power."

"True, very true!"

"Would it not be wise for us to apply at once to the police authorities?" Boudinot suggested.

"Yes, I think it would."

"The superintendent is said to be an uncommonly able man, and I have no doubt that if we put the matter in his hands he will immediately set his detectives to work, and they may be able to get at the heart of this mystery."

"Your suggestion is a good one, and I think the quicker it is acted upon the better!" the father declared.

"We will take a cab, then, and go to Police Headquarters at once."

And as he spoke, the young man looked around for a carriage.

There was one a little way down the street, in front of the hotel, and Boudinot called Monteth's attention to it.

"That cab seems to be disengaged," he remarked.

"If it is, we will take it," the father replied.

The pair had been so busily engaged with this discussion that they had not noticed an aged man, poorly dressed, who had been on the opposite side of the way, but had crossed the street when they came out of the hotel and taken up a

position on the corner, only a couple of yards away from them.

In his hand the old man held some lead-pencils, and was apparently one of those street "fakirs," as they are commonly termed, who make a pretense of selling some small article to avoid being arrested by the police for public begging.

As the two turned to go down the street, the old man got in front of them so as to bar the way.

"Please to buy some pencils, gentlemen, and help a poor old man who is far from his native land."

Monteth looked earnestly in the face of the applicant and exclaimed:

"If I am not mistaken you are no stranger to me!"

"There was a time when I was not," the old man replied, in calm accents.

"You recognize me, then?"

"Yes, you are the Englishman who married the daughter of Egypt and lived for awhile in the tents of the Romany."

"And you can call me by name, doubtless?" Monteth asked.

"James Carden."

"You are right; I am the man."

"I knew you when first I set eyes upon your face, and I purposely got in your way so as to see whether you would remember me or not," the old man explained.

"Oh, yes, I know you, although it is years since we met, but you have not changed much, Father Lemuel."

"No; my people say that I am like the Wandering Jew, and profess to believe that I will never die because time deals so lightly with me."

"You certainly look just about the same as you did in the old time," Monteth remarked.

"And I am glad to meet you, Father Lemuel, particularly if you need aid, for I have plenty of money, and will be glad to help you."

"And does your heart warm to the men from whose race you took a wife?" the old Gypsy asked.

"Oh, yes, the Romanys always treated me well, and I shall be glad to do any of them a favor if it is within my power."

"And yet what can any of the men of my race do for you?" the old man asked, with a grave shake of the head.

"I do not expect that any of your people will do anything for me!" Monteth exclaimed, in a surprised tone.

"And you are willing, then, to help me merely for the sake of old times—solely because you married a daughter of Egypt and dwelt in the tents of the wanderers?" the old man demanded.

"Yes; blood is thicker than water," Monteth replied. "I look upon the men of your race as being my brothers, and I am willing to do all in my power for them. These are not mere idle words, but I mean exactly what I say, and if you put me to the test, you will find that it is so."

"It is good, and it warms my heart to find that the man to whom the old Gypsy king gave his cherished daughter is willing to acknowledge that the tent-dwellers are his kindred."

"I am not only willing to admit the fact, but glad to be able to say that it is so!" Monteth declared.

"And to prove to you that I am sincere, I now say to you to speak your wish, and if it lies in my power to gratify it, most assuredly I will do so."

"In the name of the children of ancient Egypt I thank you," the old man replied, in his stately way.

"I thank you, although I am not so hard pressed as to be obliged to ask your assistance," he continued. "I spoke as though I needed aid but to try you, and I am proud that you bore the test so nobly."

"You do not need aid, then?"

"No, not at present; but a few days ago I did, for I then thought that as I was a stranger in a strange land, without money, I would have a hard time of it; but fate conducted my wandering footsteps to a band of my brothers who had crossed the seas to try their fortunes in this New World, and glad indeed were they to see the man whom the men of Little Egypt regard as a prophet."

"You were fortunate."

"Yes; I no longer fear that the wolf will howl at my door," the old man replied.

"I am glad of that," Monteth remarked. "Although I would be pleased to be able to be of service to you, for the sake of old times."

"I believe you, my brother, and I appreciate the will as though it were the deed."

"In my need you would be glad to help me; you thought me poor and friendless, yet you hesitated not, and now, can I not do something for you? If I read the signs written on your face aright, you are in trouble."

"Yes, you are right," the father answered.

And then he explained what had occurred.

The old Gypsy shook his head with the air of a sage.

"And you were about to call upon the police for aid?" he said.

"Yes."

"There is no need of that; the children of Egypt will serve you better," the old man declared, much to the surprise of his hearers.

"I will now reveal to you a secret which no doubt will cause amazement," he continued.

"By accident I met your daughter, and soon discovered that her heart was true to the tent-dwellers.

"She had confidence in old Father Lemuel, and revealed to me the mission which she had taken upon herself, and then I promised her all the aid in my power.

"As you said, blood is thicker than water, and the man who took the life of the Gypsy princess, your wife, by that act made every Romany his foe.

"To my brothers I told the tale, and they willingly agreed to hunt this villain down. But I had not met you, and as I did not know how you felt in regard to us, I pledged your daughter to silence."

"Yes, yes; I can understand your feelings," the father said.

"It is not the way of our people, you know, to call upon house-dwellers to redress any wrongs that we may suffer," Father Lemuel remarked.

"The Romany takes the law in his own hands and pursues his foe until the opportunity comes to strike a deadly blow."

"Yes, I know that such is the custom of your race," Monteth remarked.

"And in this instance when your daughter told the story of the wrong that had been done, I and my brothers were eager to give aid. We gave up all else to play the spy. Your daughter has been followed, and this so-called Greek likewise, and I soon made the discovery that he was no stranger to me. I knew of him in England, and he was cunning enough to lead some of the sons of Egypt to forsake their tribe and tread with him the paths of crime, but as it happens it is an unfortunate thing for him that he ever lured these men away, for by means of one of them, who is now following his devious fortunes, we are able to get a hold upon him."

"Is it possible?" the father exclaimed in wonder.

"Yes, it is. This villain works in the dark, and as he is in the dark that the sons of Egypt are most at home, we are a match for him, as he will soon find. But time wanes; come with me to the home of the tent-dwellers and there you shall know all."

Gladly the two went with the aged Gypsy.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GAME REVEALED.

AFTER the woman departed, Camilla reflected for a few minutes upon the situation, and then her thoughts shaped themselves into words.

"There is no doubt that this cage into which I have been so cunningly entrapped is an extremely secure one," she murmured.

And as she spoke she rose and approached the window.

"The woman was right," she continued, as she examined the casement. "Everything about the window is solid and substantial, and it would take considerable violence to force a way out. True, I might batter a way through by using a chair, but the noise would be sure to attract the attention of my jailers, and it is certain that they would not hesitate to secure me in such a way that I would not be able to make a second attempt.

"And then, even if I succeeded in getting into the garden, if the woman's statement in regard to the dog is true, I should be worse off than I am at present."

And as she gave utterance to this reflection, with her face pressed against the window, she caught sight of a dog wandering around the garden.

He was a big, ugly-looking brute, and despite the firm nerves of the girl, she could not repress a slight shudder as she looked upon the fanged beast.

"Oh, no! I will not risk an encounter with that monster, if I can possibly avoid it," she declared.

Then she returned to her seat and surveyed the food.

"I must be careful that I am not drugged," she murmured, in a half-whisper. "I have heard of just such a game being played in a case of this kind, and I will take care to avoid being made a victim."

"The bread and water will be apt to be harmless, though, and I think I can contrive to get along very well on those two articles for awhile, but I will not touch even them until I am absolutely compelled so to do."

Then the girl was silent for a few minutes, buried in thought.

"In seeking to entrap this man I have been myself ensnared," she murmured, at last.

"I played the syren successfully enough," she continued. "I succeeded in attracting my man, but now it is a question if I have not played too bold a game."

"Whether I have or not depends upon my Gypsy allies."

"If the Romanys perform their part as well as I have mine, this cunning scoundrel may find

that he is not as able a rascal as he thinks himself to be.

"There is little doubt in my mind that he arranged this trap on purpose to catch me," she murmured, in an abrupt and decided way.

"This is no private lunatic asylum, as the woman would have me believe, but a house that this arch scoundrel has arranged expressly for my reception; but why has he gone to all this trouble?"

This was a question which puzzled Camilla exceedingly, and she puzzled long and deeply over it.

"If he has discovered who I am, and suspects that it is my design to hunt him down, then there would be a reason for his action," Camilla muttered with a brow clouded by thought.

"But I do not see how it can be possible that he could have made such a discovery," she continued, more and more perplexed as she reflected upon the matter.

"It is useless for me, though, to puzzle over the matter for soon I shall know the truth in regard to this strange affair and I am but wasting my time by engaging in idle speculations."

Having come to this conclusion the girl examined the books upon the table, and having found one that she thought would interest her, was soon deeply absorbed in reading.

For a good three hours she read on, so interested in the tale that she was not conscious of the flight of time, then a slight noise attracted her attention and she raised her eyes from the book to encounter the gaze of Anselmo, who had entered the room by means of the secret entrance through the closet.

"I am glad that you have come!" Camilla exclaimed as she closed the book and placed it upon the table. "Now I will have an explanation in regard to this strange affair."

The girl spoke in a cool, matter-of-fact way, just as if what had occurred was a common, every-day matter.

The man was surprised by the girl's coolness and a little disconcerted, but he was too old a stager to allow this to be seen, and so he only hesitated for a moment before replying.

"I trust that you have been comfortable," he said.

"Oh, yes, I have nothing to complain of as far as that goes."

"I am glad of that—but you have not eaten anything," he remarked, as he noticed that the supper had not been touched.

"I was not hungry."

"You need not have feared that there was anything wrong with the viands!" the Greek exclaimed.

"After what has occurred it would only be natural for me to be suspicious," Camilla replied.

"True—very true," the Greek admitted.

"But when you hear the reason for the proceeding perhaps you will be inclined to be lenient with me."

"I confess I am very anxious to know what it all means."

"Will you permit me to be seated?" Anselmo asked with a polite bow, his manner humble in the extreme.

"Now you are mocking me!" Camilla exclaimed.

"Oh, no, not at all!" the Greek hastened to declare.

"Is it customary for a prisoner to impose conditions on the jailer?" the girl asked, her proud lip curling in scorn.

"You must not look at the matter in that light," the other responded, seating himself as he spoke.

"But it is the truth!" Camilla declared. "I am a prisoner and you are my jailer, and I do not see how I can regard the matter otherwise."

"Permit me to explain why I have acted as I have," Anselmo remarked. "I possess what seems to me to be an excellent reason for my conduct, although, possibly, it may not appear so to you; but then, you know, we cannot all be of the same mind."

"Yes, that is true."

"The mainspring for my action is the one which has ever been the most powerful in moving mankind to good or evil since the world began," the Greek declared. "And if you were not so beautiful and charming, this incident would never have taken place, but from the first moment I beheld you I became impressed with the belief that you were the only woman in the world who could make me happy, and I really believe that your charms have turned my head so as to make me careless of all consequences as long as I can secure your love."

"It seems to me, sir, that you have taken a very strange way to make me like you," Camilla observed.

"Ah, yes, I suppose that I have," the adventurer responded, shaking his head in a melancholy way. "But lovers are like madmen, you know, and seldom listen to the dictates of reason."

"All I thought of was that I was deeply and devotedly in love with you, and although I tried to show you by all the means in my power that you had inspired me with a passion which would last while life remained, yet you seemed

so cold and indifferent that I was reduced to despair."

"I come of a warm-blooded, hot and impetuous race!" the adventurer continued, in a grandiloquent way. "And we Greeks are not apt to think of the consequences when we set our minds upon the accomplishment of a purpose."

"So I should judge from this episode," Camilla observed, significantly.

"You were cold and distant, I despaired of ever being able to win your love, and so in my despair I determined that, if I could not win you by fair means, then I would perforce try unusual ones."

"I pondered over the matter, and at last hit upon a plan, which I have carried out."

"My idea was to carry you away to a secure place where I would keep you until you agreed to marry me."

"Oh, but the idea is monstrous!" the girl exclaimed. "It cannot be possible that you are stupid enough to imagine you can gain a woman's love in any such way as this?"

"Why not?" the Greek demanded, assuming an innocent air. "Does it not show the strength and deepness of my passion?—does it not prove that I am truly in love with you, to assume such a risk as I do by adopting this desperate plan?"

"Well, that may all be very true, but I fancy that there are not many girls in the world who would be favorably impressed by being made the victim of such a plot!" Camilla affirmed.

"In my opinion it would be much more likely to give rise to hate rather than to love," she continued.

"Oh, yes, I can understand how that can be," Anselmo replied, in a placid way, seemingly not at all disturbed by the words of his captive.

"At first, I presume that it would only be natural for a woman to feel annoyed when she discovers that she has been made the victim of a carefully arranged plot," the Greek continued.

"Yes, I should say so," the girl observed, in a decidedly sarcastic way.

"But it was my calculation that in time the feeling would pass away."

"Indeed? Well, I must confess I think you are wrong about that. It is my idea that the feeling would increase rather than diminish."

"No, no, I cannot agree with you there!" Anselmo responded, in a very emphatic way.

"It is my idea that after the woman came to reflect upon the matter she would argue in this way: 'This is an awful trick to play upon any one, but the man would not have done it—would not have dared the consequences, if he had not been desperately in love with me.'

"Should I not pardon him, then, when it is really myself who am to blame? Had I not inspired him with this mad passion he never would have committed the rash act."

"Yes, I understand the argument, but I do not think it is a strong one," Camilla declared. "And in my opinion the woman must be a very weak one indeed who could be thus influenced."

"You do not think, then, that if I kept you here the time would come when you would learn to love me?" the Greek questioned.

"No, indeed!" the girl replied, in the most decided manner. "It is my opinion that the longer you keep me in this place, a prisoner, the greater would be my dislike for you."

"I do not agree with you at all!" Anselmo responded. "It is my belief that if I keep you here, the time will come when you will be touched by my devotion, and your aversion will change to love."

"The idea is utterly absurd!" Camilla cried, indignantly. "To deprive a girl of her freedom, and imprison her in a private mad-house, under the assumption that she is a lunatic, is no way to win either her friendship or her love!"

"True, it would appear so at the first glance," the Greek admitted. "But, as I said before, when you come to consider that your charms of mind and person are responsible for this mad, desperate love, you may come to think kindly of the man who was willing to do almost anything for your sake."

"You are making a great mistake by going on in this matter," Camilla replied. "And if you are wise you will try to repair the error you have made by setting me at liberty."

"Oh, no, not until I have satisfied myself that I cannot win you."

"I can settle that question immediately!" the girl exclaimed. "If you keep me here, I shall soon learn to hate you!"

"I hope not!" Anselmo exclaimed, as he rose, a smile upon his face, as though to put an end to the interview.

"It is in your power to bring your captivity to an end at any moment. Consent to be my wife, and as soon as the ceremony is over you will be free."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

CAMILLA rose in indignation.

"If you are wise you will set me free at once!" she exclaimed.

"You are running a great risk," the girl continued. "I am not without friends in New York, and when my absence is discovered an investigation will at once be set on foot; it will not take the acute bloodhounds of the law long to discover that the last time I was seen was when I was riding in your company, and they will not fail to quickly call you to an account."

The Greek shook his head.

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed, "you must not build any hopes on such a slender foundation."

"I planned this enterprise with a great deal of care, and I can assure you that I have not left any clues for the detectives to follow."

"You were out riding with me, and, of course, it is possible that we were seen by people who would be able to testify in regard to the circumstance, but if I am questioned about it I can say that we merely drove through the Park and about six o'clock I left you at the door of the hotel, which you entered."

"There had a slight breeze sprung up and you had a veil over your face, so that your features were partly concealed, but you could be recognized easily enough by your dress."

"You passed into the hotel, got the key of your room from one of the bell-boys and ascended to it."

"If after that time you disappeared in a mysterious manner, without any one being able to tell where you went to, no blame can be attached to me."

Camilla was amazed as she listened to this revelation, for until then she really did not fully understand what an accomplished rascal the Greek certainly was.

"This is really monstrous!" she exclaimed. "Is it possible that you had another woman dressed in a similar manner to myself, and could she be able to deceive the people at the hotel into the belief that when she entered the door it was I?"

Camilla could hardly credit the tale.

"That is precisely the game I planned," Anselmo replied.

"The trick is an extremely simple one, and I have no doubt it worked to perfection."

"One of the advantages of it was that no one suspects that there is anything out of the way."

"The woman was dressed exactly the same as yourself, and with the veil down in a careless way over her face looked enough like you to deceive people, who are not on the watch, and have no suspicion that there is anything wrong about the matter, and her asking for the key to your room will be proof conclusive that it was you. Thus, you see, I prevent any suspicion from attaching itself to me."

For a moment Camilla was bewildered, for she was clear-headed enough to understand that the Greek had planned the scheme with wonderful skill.

"The truth will out though!" she declared, as she recovered from her surprise.

"Plan and plot as skillfully as you will, the acute detectives will be certain to hunt you down at last!"

"Oh, I haven't any fear in regard to that," the Greek responded. "I do not know much about these New York detectives, it is true, still I have an idea that they are not half such terrible fellows as people try to make them out, and so I have little fear that any of them will be able to interfere in my plans; to my thinking there is not one chance in a thousand that you will be able to get out of this house until I get ready to release you."

As the reader is well aware, Camilla was not a girl to be easily deceived or frightened; the life which she had led had been full of strange experiences and so, although she realized that she was helpless in the hands of a desperate and determined man, yet she did not become a prey to despair.

On the contrary the hope was strong within her breast that she would succeed in escaping from the trap into which she had fallen, but though for a moment she felt a great desire to tell the scheming scoundrel, that, no matter how skillfully he might plan, he would not succeed in bending her to his will, yet a sober second thought caused her to refrain.

"I must meet force with cunning," was the idea which flashed rapidly through her brain.

"It is my policy to make this arch villain believe I am so stupefied by the discovery I am entrapped that I am completely dumfounded."

Acting on this idea Camilla shook her head and remarked:

"Well, I suppose it is possible that it may be as you say. You certainly have managed the affair with a great deal of skill, and the detectives may not be able to track you, still if they possess the ability with which the world credits them they ought to do so."

The Greek laughed in a quiet, self-satisfied way.

"My dear Miss Selden, you must not believe all you hear in regard to the marvelous achievements of these man-hunters," he declared, speaking with the confident air of a man who possessed a thorough knowledge of the subject.

"I am aware it is commonly believed that they do some wonderful feats in the line of hunt-

ing down men who are bold enough to transgress the law, but in nine cases the detectives do but little work, for the culprits usually make some terrible blunders, really stumbling right into the arms of the law."

"Of course I have but little knowledge in regard to the matter, but I have always heard the detectives spoken of in the highest terms," Camilla observed.

"Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the tales told of their wonderful deeds are but fiction, pure and simple, without a word of truth!" Anselmo asserted.

"Believe me, I know the facts, for I have traveled in many lands, and as I am a man who takes particular notice of all passing events, I have been able to watch the work of the detectives of a dozen different countries," the Greek continued. "And I can assure you that they are not half so wonderful fellows as the common report makes them out to be."

"I am not qualified to judge, of course, for I have no experience, and all I know about the matter is what I have learned from reading."

"Oh, in the pages of the novelist and in the columns of the newspapers the detective always appears as a wonderful man, I grant ye!" the gentleman exclaimed with scornful accent.

"But the detective of fiction and the detective of reality are two entirely different men, and you can depend upon it that the feats which the man-catchers perform so easily in the printed pages are seldom duplicated by the flesh-and-blood man-hunters."

"The detective is only a man, and men cannot perform miracles, for those days are past and gone."

"The man-hunter must depend upon his reasoning powers—he must have clues to go upon."

"Now take your own case; examine the matter closely and see how I arranged the affair so as to perplex the searcher after knowledge."

"You left the hotel with me for a drive."

"The chances are great that a dozen people saw us depart; suppose if you did not return to the hotel as soon as your absence was discovered, and inquiry made, I would speedily be called to an account."

"Oh, yes."

"But you must remember that, apparently, I brought you back to the hotel again," the Greek remarked.

"The idea of getting a woman, who in figure and general appearance bore a resemblance to you, was certainly a good one. Dressed precisely the same as yourself, and with a veil over her face, when she entered the hotel she was supposed to be you, by all who saw her; a natural mistake."

"By this device, I was relieved from all responsibility. As I returned you safe and sound to the hotel, no one will take the trouble to question me in regard to your mysterious disappearance, and if anybody should take it into his head to interrogate me, it will be my game to affect profound ignorance."

"True, you did go for a drive with me, but we arrived at the hotel shortly after dark, I saw you enter—and, mind you! there will be plenty of witnesses ready to testify that I have told the truth in regard to that, so you see it will hardly be possible for any one to suspect that I had ought to do with your mysterious disappearance."

"Yes, it surely looks as if you had arranged the scheme so as to escape detection," Camilla observed, thoughtfully.

"I am fully aware that I have taken a course which the judgment of the world at large would not sanction," the Greek observed in an apologetic way. "And the only excuse I have to offer is that I have gone on the old motto that all is fair in love and war."

"Your beauty—your graces of mind and person made such an impression on me that I feel the world would be but a barren desert if I did not succeed in inducing you to share my lot with me in the future."

"Notably, I am hot-blooded—that is due to the Southern sun under which I was born, and when the idea came into my head to decoy you away to some secure retreat, where I would have you all alone to myself, so as to be able to plead my cause without danger of interruption, the bold, desperate game seemed to me to be perfection itself, therefore, with the ardor born of a soul-absorbing passion I proceeded to carry out the scheme."

"I am a wealthy man, and in this world the power of gold is great, so I had very little trouble in making arrangements for the successful carrying out of my plans, and, as you are already aware, everything worked with the perfection of well-calculated machinery."

"Upon my word I must say this is the most astonishing affair that ever came to my knowledge," Camilla declared.

"Such a way to win a girl's love was never heard of outside of the pages of the novelist."

"Yes, I am aware that it seems like the act of a madman," the Greek replied.

"But you must bear in mind that love is in a great degree akin to madness," Anselmo continued, with a smile.

"Most certainly that seems to be true enough in this case."

"I am very sanguine by nature," the adventurer explained. "And as I have been successful in the carrying out of some difficult enterprises, I have strong hopes that in the end I will succeed in inducing you to look with a favorable eye upon my ardent suit."

"Well, if the old adage be true, that fortune favors the brave, you surely ought not to fail," Camilla remarked, affecting to be more amused than angry at the persistence of the man.

"Oh, I am one who firmly believes that Heaven helps those who help themselves!" the Greek declared.

"Then, too, there is another fact which bids me hope," Anselmo continued. "It is my idea that your affections are not engaged, and so there is a chance for me."

"Am I not correct in assuming that you are not bound to marry any one?"

Camilla was a truthful girl, and so was loth to descend to falsehood, but in such an emergency as this, she felt that it would not be a great sin if she did equivocate a little.

And although she really loved the young man who had been so devoted to her, and fully intended to marry him when her mission of vengeance was accomplished, yet as she had not actually bound herself to wed him at a certain date, she considered she was justified in declaring that she was free to wed whom she pleased.

"Ah, my dear Miss Selden, you can not imagine how much pleasure it gives me to hear you declare that you are free to give yourself to me if I can only succeed in touching your heart," the Greek exclaimed, pretending to be overjoyed at the intelligence.

"Yes, yes, but even if I am heart-free, it does not follow that you will succeed in gaining my affections," Camilla warned.

"All I ask is an open field—a fair chance, and if I do not succeed then, I am content to fail."

"You need not be under any apprehension that you are in danger of suffering violence at my hands," he hastened to add. "For I can assure you that you will be treated with the utmost respect while you are in under this roof."

"All I ask is permission to call upon you daily, and that you will be gracious enough to give me the pleasure of your society for an hour or two, so I may have an opportunity to urge my suit in a becoming manner."

"Under the circumstances I am obliged to comply with your request, for I cannot help myself," Camilla remarked with a demure smile.

"Ah, my dear Miss Selden, I hope you will not look at the matter in that way!" the Greek declared.

"Try and forget the circumstances which really exist, and bring yourself to believe that you are merely my guest here, paying a visit, which I will do all in my power to make as pleasant as possible."

"I fear that you are asking me to perform an impossibility," the girl replied with a doubtful shake of the head.

"It is a difficult task to make the prisoner forget the barriers which bar the way to freedom."

"Yes, it is the truth; I am aware of that, but under the circumstances the situation cannot be changed at present, and you must try and make the best of it."

"With the exception that freedom is denied you, you can reign here like a queen, for your slightest wish will be gratified."

"All you have to do is to speak and your request will be immediately complied with."

"Well, I suppose I will have to make myself contented here until you either succeed in making me fall in love with you, or else come to the conviction that all efforts in that line are hopeless," Camilla remarked with an air of resignation.

"Yes, you have correctly stated the situation as it exists, but I can assure you that it will not be an easy matter to convince me that I can never hope to succeed in gaining your affections!" Anselmo exclaimed with an air of determination.

"I tell you frankly I do not think you will succeed."

"Ah, yes, but if I do, not make the trial it is certain that I will not," the Greek rejoined.

"So you must not blame me if I keep you here secluded for awhile," he continued.

"And you must not blame me if I do all in my power to escape, for it is the nature of my sex to be perverse," Camilla declared.

The adventurer laughed in a confident way, as though he was not troubled by the announcement.

"Heaven forbid that I should deny you the pleasure of trying, although I warn you in advance that you will only have your labor for your pains."

"And now I will take my departure," he continued. "If you need anything, ring the call-bell on the table, and your attendant will come."

"Adieu until to-morrow!"

A moment more and the girl was alone.

CHAPTER XL.

GOLD IS NOT POTENT.

CAMILLA resumed her seat in the rocking-chair, and fell to meditating upon the situation.

Soon her thoughts resolved themselves into words, which escaped in a low murmur from her lips.

"Of all the men whom I have ever encountered, this one is certainly the most dangerous," the girl declared.

"He is a smooth talker, pleasantly spoken, but a desperate and determined villain for all that, and his declaration that I need not have any fear of violence at his hands is only made to lull my fears, and throw me off my guard, so that when he comes to the conclusion he cannot hope to get me to consent to wed him by fair means, he will be able to try foul, without my being prepared for such an action.

"But, cunning as he is, he has not been able to deceive me.

"I shall be constantly on the watch, and ever on the lookout for trickery.

"He laughed when I told him I should use my best endeavors to escape, as though he considered it but an idle boast on my part, but that is where he made a mistake, for I was never more in earnest in my life.

"He fancies, I suppose, that he has arranged his plans so carefully that it will not be possible for me to escape from this prison-house, no matter how earnestly I may try.

"The doors and windows are guarded, and without the fierce beast roams in the yard, so, apparently, there is no chance for me, and in that way there certainly is not, but I happen to have plenty of money in my pocket, and more at my command as soon as I am free from this place, and it will be strange indeed if I do not succeed in bribing the woman who acts as my jailer.

"Gold is all-powerful, and has opened many a prison door since the world began.

"I will read for awhile so as to allow time for this arch villain to depart, and then summon the woman.

"It will be very odd if I do not succeed in arousing her cupidity."

After coming to this resolution, Camilla waited for a good half-hour, and then she sounded the call-bell.

In a few moments the woman made her appearance, coming through the closet, and now the girl comprehended why it was that both the woman and the Greek came into the room by way of the closet instead of using the door.

In the back of the closet was a secret entrance, and the door of the closet was so arranged that the two portals could not be open at the same time, therefore it would not be possible for the prisoner by a desperate rush to escape through the door.

"What do you wish, miss?" asked the woman.

"Well, really, nothing in particular," Camilla answered, with her most agreeable smile.

"Why did you summon me, then?" the other asked, surprised.

"Because I am lonesome and I want some one to talk to."

The woman shook her head and frowned, slightly.

"I don't know as I care to remain," she responded, slowly and in a doubtful way.

"It is my business to wait on you, you understand, not to act as your companion," she continued. "And I do not believe the master would like it if he knew I did anything of the kind."

"I do not think he would have any objection," Camilla observed.

"I am not so sure about that!" the woman declared, tartly.

"What harm can there be in your obliging me in such a simple way?"

"Well, I don't know as there is any particular harm in the thing, but I do not believe he would like it, that is all."

"He told me he was going to do all in his power to make me comfortable, and I should not think he would deny me a little favor of this kind."

"He didn't give me any orders in regard to the matter, so I don't know just what I ought to do about it," the woman responded, slowly.

"You ought to give me the benefit of the doubt," Camilla urged, with a laugh.

The woman was surprised by the light-hearted manner of the prisoner, and cast a searching glance at her from under her bushy eyebrows.

"You don't understand my taking the matter so easily, eh?" the girl queried.

"It is none of my business," the other replied, shortly.

"Well, you see, the explanation is that I am a female philosopher—a firm believer in the old adage that what cannot be cured must be endured, and so as I am not able to see that I will gain anything by moping over my present situation, I have resolved to be as cheerful as possible.

"Of course you understand that I now know just exactly how I am situated, and so I am not troubled by any vague apprehension of some unknown danger threatening me."

"I don't know anything about the matter," the woman declared, with a stolid face.

"Ah, I see; all you know is that you are paid so much to look after me, eh?"

"Yes, that is it."

"It is a rather hazardous service that you are performing," Camilla observed in a reflective way.

"I don't know about that," the other retorted in a sullen tone.

"Oh, yes, it is!" Camilla declared. "And if you will take time to think the matter over I am sure you will see I am right in my assertions."

"If I should happen to escape, and call upon the officers of the law to punish the persons concerned in the matter, all of you who are mixed up in the affair would be apt to pay pretty dearly."

"Yes, but you will not escape!" the woman responded, grimly. "So there isn't any danger of your getting anybody in trouble."

"Oh, don't you be so confident!" Camilla exclaimed.

"This is a very uncertain world, you know, and the wisest person in it can never tell just what is going to happen," the girl continued.

"I don't doubt that you have taken all possible precautions, but the best laid plans of mice and men often fail, you know."

A contemptuous grunt was all the response the woman deigned to make.

"You ought to be paid pretty well for running the risk," Camilla suggested.

"I am satisfied with the wages I get," the woman replied in her stiff, cold way.

"This Greek must be a wealthy man to afford to indulge in a luxury of this kind," the girl suggested.

"He pays me well enough, and that is all I trouble my head about, although I believe he is very rich."

"I have a fair share of wealth too," Camilla observed in a reflective way.

"You are lucky!"

"And I do not believe I care any more for my money than this Greek does for his."

"I am not in a position to judge in regard to that."

"Excuse me—I think you are!"

"I don't understand you!" the woman exclaimed with a stare of surprise.

"I can explain in a very few words," Camilla remarked.

"The Greek has agreed to give you a certain sum of money to act as jailer to me?"

"Maybe he has."

"And the sum ought to be a large one for you are running a great deal of risk."

"I don't see as I am!" the other exclaimed, in a defiant way.

"That is because the matter has not been presented to you in the proper light," Camilla rejoined.

"You are engaged in an unlawful enterprise. I have been decoyed to this house and deprived of my liberty; now, if my friends—who will be certain to move Heaven and earth to ascertain what has become of me—succeed in getting on the right track, it will mean State Prison to all concerned in the affair."

The woman's face became more stolid than ever, and she brought her jaws together in a dogged way.

"You think, of course, the Greek has managed the matter so well that there isn't any likelihood of the discovery being made, but smarter men than he is have come to grief—men who could plan and execute just as well."

"Yes, I suppose so," the woman admitted, in an extremely sullen way.

"Of course the search may not succeed, but you will have to run the risk that it will, and so you ought to be well paid."

"I am satisfied with what I am to get."

"Well, I do not know what the amount is, but no matter how large the sum, I will give you double to arrange the matter so I can escape."

The woman shook her head.

"Doesn't the offer tempt you?"

"No, it does not."

"I will give you treble, then!" Camilla exclaimed.

"You may as well save your breath, miss, for you are only wasting it," the woman declared.

"Well, I confess I do not understand it," Camilla observed, slowly.

"I should think you would be glad to take the offer, for you not only get a great deal more money, but also assure yourself that you will not be punished for the part you have taken in this matter."

"Well, as far as that goes I am not much afraid, and then, although I am as hungry after money as any one, yet gold isn't everything."

"It is very nice to have plenty of money," Camilla suggested.

"Oh, yes, but there are other things just as potent as gold."

The girl looked surprised at this declaration.

"Oh, you may stare, but it is the truth, although you may not comprehend how it can be so," the woman continued.

"Gold is all very well, and I don't mind taking all I can get, but there is such a thing as paying too dearly for money," she added.

"You think, of course, that it would be an easy matter for me to betray the gentleman and release you, and I do not doubt you would keep your word and pay me well for the service, although you might be mean enough after I got

you out to denounce me to the police as being the woman who acted as your jailer instead of rewarding me."

"Oh, no!" Camilla exclaimed, immediately. "I would not be guilty of doing anything of the kind!"

"I can assure you that you need not hesitate to trust me."

"Well, I will do you the justice to say that I do not believe you would not keep faith with me," the woman declared.

"But even if I was sure you would pay me four times what I am getting now I should not dare to aid you to escape."

"The master, although a nice pleasant gentleman is a man with a violent temper, and like a good many of these foreigners is not apt to care what he does when his anger rises."

"The fear of his rage then is more potent than the attraction of money?"

"Yes, miss; that is just it, and I am not going to run the risk of getting him in a passion, so, if you will excuse me, I will depart in order to avoid temptation."

And the woman retreated without Camilla attempting to detain her.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE GYPSY'S DOUBTS.

THE Romany rascal, Doubleback, was waiting for the Greek when Anselmo took leave of the captive girl.

And after the Greek joined the Gypsy, the two walked down the road together.

"How did you find her—a regular spitfire, I suppose?" the Gypsy said.

"Oh, no, she was inclined to be reasonable, and to put the best possible face on the matter."

"You don't mean it!" Doubleback exclaimed, in great surprise.

"Yes, that is the truth, and I must say I was considerably amazed, too, for I expected she would raise a deuce of a row."

"I am afraid there is something wrong about the matter!" Doubleback declared, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Oh, no, everything is all right," Anselmo replied, in a confident way.

"She is sensible enough to understand that it would not do her any good to get angry—to give free play to her temper. She is securely caged, and is wise enough to understand it will be much better for her to take matters quietly than to kick up a row."

"It does not seem natural for such a woman as she is thought, to act in that way," the Gypsy observed, evidently troubled.

"Well, I don't know about that. Under the circumstances, I don't see what else she could do."

"But she isn't the kind of woman to submit quietly to anything of this kind, unless she has changed wonderfully since the time when I tried to come a little hanky-panky game on her."

"Ah, but you do not take into account the difference in the situation," the Greek argued.

"Then she was a free woman, now she is a helpless prisoner."

"I do not think that would make any difference," Doubleback replied.

"The hot Gypsy blood is in her veins, and it would be apt to speak if she considered herself to be wronged."

"She did not seem to be much disturbed after the first surprise was over," the Greek remarked.

"At first she assumed an indignant tone, and was inclined to talk pretty sharply, but after I explained just how the matter stood, she seemed to be rather amused by the situation," Anselmo continued.

"Amused, eh?"

"Yes, I took pains, you know, to assure her that she need not be under any apprehension that she would receive any rude treatment, telling her that it was my hope by gentle supplications to win her favor."

"And do you think she was fool enough to believe that?" Doubleback demanded, bluntly.

"She certainly acted as if she did."

"It is my belief she was fooling you!" the Gypsy asserted.

"She is a sly cat," he continued. "And it would be just like her to do her best to get you to believe she was not at all alarmed at her position, so as to be able to throw you off your guard."

"My dear Doubleback, I do not think you are right in regard to this matter, but if you are, I can assure you that she will not gain anything by trying to play such a game on me."

"I would be willing to bet a fortune that she is up to some trick!" Doubleback asserted in a confident tone.

The Greek seemed to be amused at the declaration, for a smile came over his features.

The Gypsy noticed it, and immediately exclaimed:

"Oh, you may laugh, but unless I have made a great mistake, you will find that before you get through it will not be any laughing matter!"

"Doubleback, you are inclined to allow your suspicions to run away with you, I am afraid," Anselmo remarked in a sneering way.

"But that is one of your weak points," he continued.

"You are a strange compound. One moment you are willing to rush bull-like into danger—to use violence when there is no need of your doing so—for the sake of gaining a small amount of booty, and the next you grow so timid as to be ready to take to your heels, and run like a deer at the first shadow which falls upon your path."

"I never set myself up to be a model of a man," the other replied in a dogged way.

"I know that I am not perfect and I never pretended that I was, but I can just tell you that I am not getting frightened at a shadow this time."

"I understand the nature of this woman a great deal better than you do, although I do not pretend to be one-half as great a man as you are."

"If she is not violent and angry—if she affects to be contented to remain a prisoner—it is because she is up to some game."

"Oh, I am not disputing the correctness of that statement," Anselmo remarked. "I don't doubt she is puzzling her head with all sorts of schemes, but she might as well spare herself the trouble, for I have the thing so nicely arranged that there is not one chance in a thousand for her to escape."

"You don't really expect to be able to persuade her to marry you?"

"Well, no, I can't say that I do," the Greek replied in a reflective way.

"There is a chance, of course, that she may be weak-minded enough to believe I am so madly in love as to be willing to do anything to gain her hand."

"Men have been idiotic enough to do such foolish things, you know."

The Gypsy nodded.

"But I do not think there is much danger of her doing anything of the kind, and so will have to resort to the old game of administering a drug, so as to render her partially unconscious, incapable of understanding what is going on, then I will introduce a minister—a fellow, you comprehend, who, provided he is paid enough, will be willing to perform a marriage ceremony without troubling his head in regard to the condition of the contracting parties."

"Well, if this was any ordinary girl the scheme might go through all right, but in this case you are running a big risk," Doubleback asserted.

"How so?"

"She is a half-Gypsy, you know, and if she appeals to the sons of Egypt for aid there is no corner of the earth where you will be able to hide away from their vengeance."

The Greek laughed, contemptuously.

"You laugh because you don't know the Gypsies!" Doubleback asserted.

"If you knew them as well as I do you would understand that a man is not wise to brave their anger."

"I am not afraid of them!" the Greek asserted. "In Europe, possibly the Romany race may be powerful, but in this country there are too few of the wanderers to cause apprehension."

By this time the pair had reached the railway station.

"You must remain in the neighborhood of the old house to keep watch," the Greek said. "I will come again at five to-morrow, and if I find there is no chance to win the girl by fair means I shall then proceed to get ready to try foul."

The approaching train cut short the conversation at this point.

Anselmo departed, and Doubleback proceeded to retrace his steps.

The Gypsy went on his way with a gloomy brow, for a presentiment of coming danger weighed him down, and when he turned into the lonely back road on which the old house was situated he came face to face with Father Lemuel and three stalwart sons of Egypt.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

PROMPTLY at a quarter to five on the following day to the one on which the incidents occurred related in our last chapter, the Greek descended from a train and started for the old house.

When he arrived in the neighborhood he looked around for Doubleback, but the Gypsy was not visible.

Entering the house he was informed by the woman that the Gypsy had gone to the station to meet him.

"I have missed him on the way," he remarked, and then he entered the apartment of the captive girl.

Camilla received him politely saying: "I hope you have come to set me free, for this confinement is dreadful."

"Oh, no, you must give me a chance to gain your affections," he replied. "You see I am sanguine that in a week I can make you love me with all your heart!"

Hardly had the boast been uttered when into the room came a rush of people through the secret entrance in the closet.

Old Father Lemuel led the way, and close behind him came James Carden, the young lover, Boudinot, the villainous-looking Gypsy, Doubleback, while four stalwart sons of Egypt brought up the rear.

The Greek, taken completely by surprise, started and thrust his hand into his breast as if to clutch a weapon, but the moment he made the motion the Gypsies threw themselves upon him, and, being provided with cords, soon had him securely bound, despite his struggles.

With a cry of joy, Camilla rushed to her father.

"We came just in time," Carden remarked. "You played a bold game, my girl, but, thanks to you, we have succeeded in trapping this villain who has so long gone unpunished."

"What does this mean?" Anselmo demanded. "Why have you dared to lay hands upon me?"

And as he spoke he cast a searching glance at his tool, Doubleback.

From the sullen look upon the dark Gypsy's face, and the fact that he remained in the background, the Greek got the idea that the Gypsies had succeeded in forcing a confession from him.

"It is no use, captain!" the Gypsy exclaimed, understanding the meaning of the look. "The tide has set dead against you. I hated to be obliged to give you away, but I had to do it. I told you years and years ago that you would not have any luck if you incurred the anger of the sons of Egypt."

"You laughed at my warning, but things have turned out just as I expected they would, and the blow has fallen at last."

"Why do you speak in riddles?" Anselmo exclaimed, in a dogged, defiant way. "I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do," Father Lemuel replied, sternly. "This pretended ignorance will not save you. You have taken the life of a daughter of our race, and now the sons of Egypt demand vengeance."

"What nonsense is this?" Anselmo demanded, savagely. "And who are you that you should dare to sit in judgment upon me?"

"I am the representative of the Gypsy king, a prophet among my people, and am named the Wise One," the old man answered. "It is not our custom to call upon the house-dwellers to redress our wrongs when we suffer, but we take the law into our own hands."

"And what have I ever done to any of your race?" the Greek demanded.

"Your accuser is this Romany whom you lured into the path of crime," Father Lemuel replied, indicating Doubleback. "He has betrayed you, fearing that the vengeance of the sons of Egypt would fall upon his head if he attempted to defy the power of his people."

"If he says aught against me he lies!" the Greek cried, fiercely, feeling that he was in a fearful snare.

"Tell your story!" Father Lemuel commanded, addressing the dark-browed Gypsy.

The man obeyed, and told the tale of how the young wife had been killed by the Greek when she awoke while the pair were robbing her cottage.

The murder was an accident, for the Greek did not intend to kill the woman, only choking her as she awoke, so as to be able to escape with his plunder.

Angrily the murderer denied the accusation, but Father Lemuel heeded not his words.

"Go, my children," he said. "Leave this villain to the justice which has overtaken him."

All withdrew save the aged man and the four stalwart Gypsies.

Next morning the metropolis had a mystery to wonder over, for the body of the Greek was found in the road; he had been strangled, and the doers of the deed were never discovered.

A few more words and our tale is told.

Carden succeeded in proving his claim to the heritage left by his brother, and once again assumed his own name.

All obstacles were now removed from the path of the lovers, and they were wedded.

Camilla retired from a public life, and soon won a position as one of the notable women of the metropolis, and none of her associates suspected that she had once played the part of a syren to lure a villain to his doom.

THE END.

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